Spatialising Student Voice

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ABSTRACT

Spatialising student voice explicates how power relations influence the possibility of students' epistemic becoming, as a starting point for (re)positioning their student voice agentically. With its roots in democratic mainstream school reform, and its position as an agent of transformation, student voice, in an inclusive culture, should equip students, through their involvement in shaping their curriculum, to find their voice as a process of epistemic development. In UK higher education, student voice is employed to "drive up the quality" of the new student experience. In my professional practice, I have worked to authenticate students' voices through "rich exchanges", initiating these in contradiction to the micropolitics of power. I have employed Q methodology to reveal students' lived experience of student voice, drawing on it to operationalise their subjectivity. Forty-five students from five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students at a post-1992 UK university Q sorted 42 propositions about student voice, and this work was enhanced by narratives from the students' focussed discussions. Using a social constructionist interpretive framework, a sociological gaze was applied to illuminate students' shared viewpoints. 'Being', 'doing' and 'seeing' student voice as distinct parameters, tells a story of students' voices constrained within the university's practiced space.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Practice stories

In “Tell me a story – a way to knowledge”, Remenyi (2005) argues that story telling is a fundamental way of understanding our environment and relationships existing in it. Thus, it is a key feature of sound research within any methodological approach. In whatever way narrative is (re)presented, the starting point is always a story. Frank (2010) says the primary work of stories is to act as guides to help people focus their attention on issues that matter to them and to think about their selections in an evaluative way. Bearing in mind the capacity of stories to guide thinking, and hence influence methodological decision-making in research, this chapter opens with practice stories that were to prove pivotal in the bigger research story that makes up this thesis. My first experience of module evaluation in higher education (HE) laid the foundations for my professional practice.

Being economical with the truth

> In a way, they seemed to be conducting the case independently of me. Things were happening without me even intervening. My fate was being decided without anyone asking my opinion.
>
> (Camus,1942:95)
>
> But in another way, I had to admit that it also possessed the whole secret of good organization. After all, the condemned man was obliged to lend moral support. It was in his interest that everything should go off without a hitch.
>
> (Camus,1942:107)

In 2005, I collected student feedback and submitted it to the systems department for analysis. Results highlighted practice that was received negatively, and this was relayed to me in a negative manner. I was surprised by the way in which the feedback was used as an indicator of my performance without space for redress. I

later discovered that common practice in the department was to throw unfavourable evaluations in the bin.

One of my frustrations in manoeuvring within the institutional constraints of higher education has been the objective philosophy underlying efforts to raise the quality of the curriculum. Having previously worked in private sector restaurants, I was familiar with quality standards, having helped develop them in restaurant brand management. They are a necessary tool in controlling standardised restaurant operations, where audits ensure consistency, and are generally fit for purpose in this industrial setting.

I soon learnt how the game of quality control was played in higher education, and how systems were manipulated to meet institutional quality audits, especially in the objective practice of student feedback and its reporting. This I found frustrating. In the restaurant business, I had learnt how to get my team to be transparent about feedback in order to be able to sort out restaurants under threat of closure. In one of my restaurants, I was tasked with rectifying a quality problem with the food. Through instilling values in practice (including open dialogue about complaints), I was able to identify factors that impacted on the operation and deal with these with insight. I eventually discovered that the sous chef had no taste buds and was drowning the food with salt. This discovery saved the restaurant; and the way I dealt with it built a supportive relationship with the chef concerned. In an alternative situation he might have been fired.

The point here is that being open allows problems to be voiced by staff, bringing them into view so that they can be understood through dialogue, and choosing an appropriate response or course of action. Action may be required, but this needs to be considered within the wider organisational context, and may require support, training or a change of direction in a developmental way, so that learning can take place for the individual and the organisation. In my commercial example, this was connected to growth, as the restaurant I was tasked with saving was failing financially. Economic growth involved putting in place measures to understand problems, and then working with the resulting evidence to initiate strategic measures. This could only

happen with the help of staff, who held many of the answers. It also required the leadership and trust of the organisation to support appropriate action.

Conditioned to expect this open and honest process, I soon learnt that being honest about negative student feedback in HE would work against my career aspirations. Student feedback in quality audits had to be positive and indicate action points that could be ironed out and tell a positive story. The problem for me was the tendency I perceived to manipulate feedback to meet organisational objectives, rather than any desire to really understand and mobilise student voice (SV). However, I am optimistic about change in practice; and this is the underlying ontological motivation for my interest in the area of student voice and the focus for my practitioner research.

Student voice context

At the start of my Educational Practice Doctorate (EdD) in 2011, the concept of student voice was in its infancy in higher education. I was seeking insight from academics to help me to inform my student voice practice and to help me to explicate the manipulation of feedback recounted in my first practice story. Student voice was positioned in “competing narratives” within developmental discourses: democratic, transformative and instrumentalist discourses; mechanisms of control for greater efficiency and competitive positioning (Czerniawski and Garlick, 2011:279). Czerniawski and Kidd (2011). For Rudduck and Fielding (2006), there are tensions between SV for institutional improvement versus SV for students’ personal objectives, the former holding the risk of objectifying students, the latter to build students’ active capacity; developing their self-esteem and sense of agency. Fielding (2011) posits that students’ voices should contribute to the development of education through dialogue and meaning making. Czerniawski and Kidd, (2011:xxxvii) concur, stating that we need to “encourage and 'allow' [learners of all ages] to have a voice as a means of educating them about their role in the world as much as their own role in their learning”. Biddulph (2011) raises a concern that current practices make students tokenistic contributors to processes which fail to provide an opportunity to exercise agency over the curriculum.

Rudduck's vision of student voice in an inclusive culture is that it should equip students, through their involvement in shaping their curriculum, to be active citizens (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000), preparing them to contribute to society in a socially responsible fashion. This "new wave" of transformative pupil or student voice has been about realising the democratising potential of voice (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002; Fielding, 2010). Dewey (1916/1944) and Stenhouse laid the foundations for democratic student voice (Fielding, 2010; Fielding, 2016). The concept's roots are in democratic mainstream school reform, and it is situated as an academic field and an agent of school transformation through Jean Rudduck's pioneering work in the 1990's, influenced by Stenhouse (Fielding 2007; 2010).

Student voice as a normative project has its objective in ethical and moral practice, which aims to give students the right to democratic participation in educational processes (Fielding, 2001; 2007; 2009; 2010; 2016; Taylor and Robinson, 2009), transcending the classroom to involve the wider community in the democratic, social and pedagogical aims of education in the twenty first century (Mockler and Groundwater Smith, 2015).

Ontological insights into students' engagement with student voice underpin my developing practice with students, in line with Rudduck and Fielding's (2006:224) ideals: "being able to 'have a say' on things that matter to you is important but the implications of 'finding a voice' are greater; they engage with issues of personal identity". The objective is to develop students' agency. This is explicated by Barnett (2009:435) as "epistemic becoming": students' development of dispositions and qualities in their journey of coming to know.

Bragg and Manchester (2012:3) suggest that, as a metaphor, voice "evokes notions of presence and authenticity", which links it to its emancipatory roots. The emancipatory or social justice nature of voice can be attributed to the struggle and rights of humans, as expressed, for example, through civil rights movements. It is necessary to reflect for a moment when we consider voice in its political relationship to students. Breslin suggests that "those who have made the long march from

voicelessness will want to put things – the things that matter to them – in their own words as student protests have demonstrated in the UK" (2011:60). In 2010, students used their collective voice to protest about tuition fees (Lewis et al., 2010), creating their own public space (Greene, 1982). Voice in its political context (as power and agency) may be problematic when considering its use in a partnership approach to the governance of universities, and may provide a reason to control student voice, dumbing-down its transformative potential in a form of "vernacular ventriloquism" (Bragg and Manchester, 2012:3).

In 2011 the *Student Voice Handbook* was published, bringing together a "diversity of voices around student voice" in a "desire to bridge the academic/practitioner divide" (Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011: xxxiv). Here Wes Streeting, former president of the National Union of Students (NUS), explained how educational reforms from New Labour (and the New Right previously), underpinned by neoliberal ideologies of marketisation, consumerism and choice, had seen a radical power shift from provider to user (ibid). Associated discourses had sought to "drive up quality", and student voice and student consumerism had intentionally shared the same meaning and an intrinsic link to quality improvement (ibid).

In 2001, Fielding, in the context of schools, made references to students' increasing demands in response to their internalisation of discourses of performativity. This was ten years before tuition fees put student voice high on the agenda of higher education:

> Students may well become increasingly vocal and demanding, their language replicating the discourse of performance and their requirements fitting ever more snugly within the templates of accepted "good practice". Whilst not necessarily a disaster, such a future runs the risk of being increasingly fraught and sadly disappointing for all concerned. In it, teachers would become threatened where they could be invigorated, defensive where they could be open and exploratory; students would become unevenly demanding of the partnership of learning and ungenerous in their understanding of their teachers, themselves and the possibility of schooling as an educative process.
>
> (Fielding, 2001:108)

In 2012, with the introduction of higher tuition fees in HE, Czerniawski (2012:17) drew

upon Gunter and Thomson (2007) to raise concern that the zeitgeist's devotion to student voice might get reduced to a "rhetoric of agency" associated with the performative agenda. This was confirmed by Fielding in 2016, who stated that student voice had cemented its position in the quality agenda of this new student experience:

> In the last quarter century even the rise of potentially promising developments such as the 'student voice' movement owes significantly more to the now hegemonic neo-liberal myopia of market-led customer orientation than it does to traditions of civic education, let alone its more radical counterparts in the democratic schools' movement.
>
> (Fielding, 2016:4)

Building a culture of participatory practice

In 2010-13 I led a student voice project: a culture change initiative which involved determining strategy, designing processes and practices, implementing interventions and evaluating their impact. Working in a participatory way with staff, graduate interns, the Students' Union (SU) and student representatives (SR), I sought to authenticate the representation of student voice through practice and research. In this way "the evaluator becomes a conduit for making such voices heard" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:26).

In an evaluation of the processes and practices used to evaluate students' experience of their learning, I noted that systems were not fit for purpose. They included unstructured feedback and processes which lacked stakeholder engagement and necessary purpose (see Figure 1.1). I set out to understand and change student voice practice.

- Lack of student engagement in processes and practices – in module feedback and staff-student meetings.
- Feedback systems devolved from school level: mid-module and end-of-module evaluations. Transition from paper-based forms to electronic methods reduced the quantity of responses. Central analysis delayed/stopped feedback being returned to module teams. Time was creating disconnect.
- Lack of immediacy in responding/resolving issues led to escalation of issues/magnified minor problems.

- Student voice: unclear processes for discussing, addressing and responding to comments.
- Data from student forums recorded by an administrator and then interpreted by course leaders, who were able to influence and misrepresent student voice.
- Qualitative data lost in the process.
- At school level, National Student Survey (NSS) results were taking precedence over department-level activity; and there were generic discussions with no clear understanding of the nature of comments.
- Action taken on feedback directly received by Head of Department (reactionary action). Pressures of complaint culture.
- Feedback collected: student forums 3 times a year; student rep meetings 3 times a year; mid-module evaluation; end-of-module evaluation; Student Council and NSS survey (Level 6 in Semester 2). My perception was that there was no consistency in the method of collection and analysis; no feeding forward and joining up of the process. There was potential for issues to be left unresolved or to escalate.
- No knowledge of practices in other schools.
- Feedback form was designed to match language of NSS form, the aim being to improve NSS feedback; a belief that students not giving positive feedback were not understanding the question.
- Managing the NSS process to increase participation, explain the language and improve positive comments.

Figure 1.1: Factors impacting upon student voice: my practice insights 2010

I worked with student representatives to build a participatory approach to the student voice process and change the culture to one where students were given agency to discuss and resolve issues. This was facilitated by reducing the staff-to-student ratio, a reduction deemed necessary to address the power imbalance. I used a mentoring approach where students were coached in “on the job” management and facilitation skills, working on a model of a peer-led solution-focused negotiation. In my efforts to work closely with student representatives, my first step towards breaking down barriers in the staff-student meetings was to move towards a partnership approach, with the aim of discussing issues and either resolving them or coming to an agreed response that avoided escalating difficult issues.

To encourage participation, the team fostered a vertical peer leadership approach that encouraged students to take responsibility for discussion, finding solutions to

problems and resolving issues for their peers (third year for second year, and so on). Students produced meeting minutes providing their interpretation of events and creating ownership of information dissemination. Meetings were “lively”, and attendance increased. When we disseminated this work at the 2011 university conference, having students co-present – now commonplace – was innovative practice. In the spirit of my voice work, student representatives presented un-primed, to enable them to give their authentic take on co-created initiatives. This was a key culture change moment and I could see students’ agency developing and that co-created initiatives held transformative potential. In 2012 I conducted focus groups (FG) with these student representatives to capture their lived experience of student voice, I interpret this data at the start of chapter 4 and use their expert narratives to underpin my student voice Q set.

The insight from these focus groups informed my practice; a student voice Facebook Project which aimed to provide an informal/formal space mediated by a graduate intern “away from staff” for student talk: a frontstage/backstage initiative (Karl and Peluchette, 2011). This practice was an intervention as a response to narratives that told me students were not engaging in formal processes. This platform was engaged to provide students with the agency to discuss course matters with their peers and for the intern to mediate difficult conversations between staff and students. The key themes emerging from this research were: communication, mediation, community, dialogic engagement, and developing identity. This continued for three years and gained awards for student representatives and graduate interns involved in the practice. At this time, when I was still in my course leadership role, 100% was achieved for student satisfaction in the 2014 National Student Survey.

The stories recounted above are key factors in this research, insofar as they were instrumental in its initiation, its subsequent focus, and its final direction. I wanted to build on the insights they provided. At the same time, I was receiving approbation from colleagues and the Students’ Union for my fresh ideas and participatory approach.

A paradigm shift to engaging students as partners in educational discourse was initiated by the introduction of tuition fees in 2012 (detailed in Chapter 2). The focus turned to introducing discourses that would improve the student experience and the performative practices of accountability deriving from students' feedback. In my work with students, I found getting other staff to trust practice that developed students' agency was counter-discourse and challenging. My optimism that the work was providing the "space" for student voice underpinned with democratic values gradually eroded. Interest in my work was stimulated by the requirement for systematic evidence of this practice for institutional review purposes. The doors were closing. Without the necessary support, and with changes due to the constant turnover of graduate interns and SU staff in a landscape that had become more outcome-driven, my practice became unstable and I came to understand that students' "innocent voices", as represented in the stories above, were being subjected to "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977:4; Connolly and Healy, 2004; James, 2015; Burke et al., 2016) by the larger discourses of power into which my work was feeding.

Positioning myself

My positioning as a researcher is influenced by my past experiences, as recounted in practice stories (Burton and Bartlett 2009). My research is positioned in the ideological and political motivations for educational reform (Bartlett and Burton, 2016), and draws on student voice literature and the sociological theorists to examine the power relations (Nelson, 2015) that manifest themselves in student voice practice: that is, specifically how students are positioned as subjects and objects in student voice practice (ibid). This aligns with my choice to utilise Q methodology within a social constructionist interpretive framework. I examine university space and explicate positional nuances as zones of engagement to provide my conceptualisation of spatialising student voice.

I have a concept of my research as improving practice. Starting from a practitioner researcher position, I set out to identify and explore relevant literature to make sense of my student voice practice, and to develop a theoretical framework to allow me to investigate students' lived experience of student voice in practiced space. As a course

leader at the start of my doctorate, and as Head of Quality for my faculty by its end, my position has been reflexive in that my experience informs my research. Positional reflexivity sees subjectivity as awareness of self in research, and how the researcher can and does influence the research environment through to interpretation (Cousin, 2013); and I am “out and proud with the first person” (Cousin, 2009:10) and transparent that my interpretation is influenced by my values as I interpret and translate students narratives according to my ontological beliefs (Blair, 2015). Social positionality takes into consideration affinity, empathy and reflexivity on positional advantages (Cousin, 2013:5). My position reflects my power in relation to students, and how this plays out in the research space (ibid) and informs my methodological decision-making and my interpretation and conceptualization of students’ experience of student voice, which I acknowledge as my (re)presentation (Cousin, 2009).

My **research purpose** is to examine the potential for students’ active practice of student voice to enable their democratic participation in university processes, and to enrich participation and dialogue in relation to their epistemic development.

My interest and study objectives:

- **To illuminate students’ constructions of student voice.**
- **To explicate the power relations influencing the possibilities for students’ epistemic becoming through their student voice practice.**

My research uses Q (Q) methodology within a social constructionist interpretive framework to explicate students’ positions on their student voice practice at the university. Q methodology provides a tool suitable for constructing meaning making with students; in my research in the construction of the student voice propositions for the Q and in the subsequent sorting of these student voice propositions as statements in a Q set. As a social constructionist researcher, I believe that there are multiple realities and that Q methodology will allow these realities about students’ lived experience to be illuminated through their engagement with, and by projecting their own unique meaning on propositions about their practice. I had used Q methodology

previously to explore mentoring relationships, and I could see the potential Q had to reveal students' positions on student voice processes and practices, and its potential return in this context: students' agentic voice. This is pertinent within the context of eliciting the voices of marginalized populations who have been seen to be passive and silenced within powerful institutions or other social systems and processes (Plummer, 2012): in this case, the population was students who agreed to participate in my study.

Q methodology is utilised in a number of disciplines with global geographic reach (Watts and Stenner, 2012). It has a long tradition of successful applications to gain valuable insights in the field of education (Stainton Rogers, 2011; Watts and Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) make the point that Q is not suitable for all studies and suggest two criteria to establish suitability: does it really matter what your participants' viewpoints are on the subject area? And can the revelation of their viewpoints make a difference? My research satisfies the criteria for suitability, as exploring students' constructions on student voice is territory underrepresented in the literature. Susan Ramlo (2006), in a United States HE context, has demonstrated that Q is an effective way to reveal the multiple epistemological views of students in relation to the evaluation of their learning. A review of the literature did not reveal any other Q study specifically examining students' perspectives on student voice.

The chapter has set the scene for my research, which was predicated on a practice story that motivated the thesis and opened doors to a body of literature to help me problematise student voice. For over 30 years, student voice literature has built the case that student voice requires democratic treatment if it is to open up space to allow students an agency that will permit them to speak, encouraging them to develop their viewpoint as a requirement of the process of "epistemic becoming" (Barnett, 2009:435).

Structure of the thesis

In this chapter, through practice stories, I have established my ontological motivation for exploring student voice, my work acknowledges academics commentary and practice in the field of student voice and notes the misappropriation of this democratic

concept in its transference to HE as a tool to inform the quality agenda. I utilise insights from student voice literature and my student voice practice in the design of my analytical framework, a Q set designed to explore students' lived experience of student voice processes and practices.

In the next chapter, I draw insights from the student voice literature to inform my analytical framework and widen the net to concepts of power to establish a conceptual framework to examine power relations at work within university practiced space. My research questions are introduced as a response to questions arising from the reviewed literature and my practice.

In Chapter 3, I provide methodological justification for my use of Q methodology within a social constructionist framework. I detail the rigour of my Q research. In the first stage of my Q, I conduct focus groups with student representatives and consider these expert participants. Their narratives make up the final contribution to my Q set and this I argue is fit for the purpose to expose students' narratives on their lived experience of student voice.

In Chapter 4, I interpret three extracted Q factors to reveal students' constructions of student voice as three themes. I use narrative action to work with critical dialogue within a social constructionist interpretive framework to illuminate spatial relationships as zones of engagement with student voice and expose power relations which I (re)present as spatialising student voice.

Chapter 5 concludes my thesis, establishing my claim to new knowledge, and provides recommendations for future practice arising from the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When I started my EdD, student voice literature was positioned in school reform as a democratic response to an emerging consumerism of education in higher education (HE). Its adoption by higher education was linked to providing student perspectives on the quality of the curriculum; which had shifted from supplier to user. I looked to the literature for insights to inform my developing practice, and as a conceptual framework to help me to address the study purpose. I present my review in two sections; in line with a developing landscape of student voice, and my Q methodology research which is iterative to this review.

My literature search is systematic and narrative, I mapped literature while identifying concepts within the transforming field of student voice, initially in the context of school reform, and then within the context of HE as further perspectives widened the net for review purposes. My review focuses on concepts that informed the challenges I faced in my student voice practice and provide insight to illuminate my trajectory in establishing students' agency.

In the first section, literature was used to inform the construction of my Q set, which is also informed by my practice insights and student representatives' narratives. In sight of my student voice practice, I survey the student voice landscape to establish the role that student voice plays in accountability within the HE quality agenda, and how this interrupts students' authentic practice. I locate student voice and understand how it is constructed by academics.

The second half of the review necessitated revisiting earlier reviewed literature with a new perspective informed by student representatives' construction of student voice, which I had captured for the Q set. I investigate the role power plays in relation to the possibility of students' epistemic becoming through their student voice practice. This I use as a conceptual framework to interpret student narratives of their lived experience of student voice practice and to conceptualise their student voice space.

Consumerism and marketisation in higher education

Education as an economic investment, with a perceived link between an educated workforce and economic prosperity, can be traced back to the 1950's, when education became seen as the place to build human capital (Bartlett and Burton, 2016). However, Dyhouse (2007) suggests that higher education cannot be understood purely in economic terms, and that to adopt a consumer mentality in assessing experiences of university is to underestimate the capacity of HE to play a more profound role in the lives of individuals.

Bartlett and Burton (2016:90) attribute the marketisation of education to the 1980's political ideology of the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher, with its rhetoric of "competition through market forces". Neo-liberal ideology focused on devolving power to education providers and linking funding to the performance and efficiency of university provision (Blake, 2010). In July 1997, under a New Labour government, David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, launched the Dearing Report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society*. This was a series of recommendations by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, which had been convened by the previous Conservative government. The Committee recommended the ending of what had effectively been free Higher Education, and in response to their recommendations, £1000 "top up" fees were introduced in 1998 via the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 (BBC, 2009). By 2006, top up fees had risen to £3000 via the Higher Education Act 2004 (Blake, 2010).

At this time, taking account of students' views in the deliberations of government, including those of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), became accepted practice, and the importance of student voice was acknowledged in the formulation of educational policies, practices and procedures (Fielding, 2010). Rudduck and Fielding (2006:219), in the context of the adoption of student voice by the school improvement movement, warn of the "perils of popularity"; and Wisby (2011:32) warns of the "bandwagon effect", whereby student voice, riding a new wave of popularity, may lead to surface compliance – to quick solutions as to "how to do it" rather than consideration of "why we might want to do it" (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006:219). In 2015, Fielding,

reflecting on the work of Jean Rudduck, makes the point that "student voice was not an add-on or a box-ticking requirement of a customer-driven, market-oriented society. It was a profound re-imagination of schooling for education" (2015a:4). In 2007, Bragg commented that:

> The fact that student voice now appears to be fully compatible with government and management objectives and that senior staff are introducing it with the explicit aim of school improvement, causes disquiet, even concern that it might be cynical and manipulative, intentionally or not masking the 'real' interests of those in power.
>
> (344)

The Browne Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, was published in October 2010, and set out an agenda for change to drive the university system through choice and competition (Anderson, 2016). The document recommended that students pay university tuition fees of £9000 per year (Blake, 2010), and these were introduced in 2012. The economic drivers behind the elevation of student voice within the university agenda can be understood in the context of the 2011 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) higher education white paper*: Students at the Heart of the System*:

> Institutions must deliver a better student experience; improving teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work…they must take more responsibility for increasing social mobility.
>
> (BIS, 2011:4)

Educational reform of the HE sector in England worked to rebalance funding for undergraduate education from government to students, placing the responsibility for attracting students on higher education institutions (HEIs), and removing the existing cap on student numbers to drive greater competition between HE providers (Office of Fair Trading (OFT), 2013).

At this time, BIS had ultimate responsibility for HE policy in the UK. It devolved this responsibility to, and oversaw the work of, the Higher Education Funding Body for

Education (HEFCE), and to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), with HEIs being regulated according to the *HEFCE Operating Framework* (HEFCE, 2016). HEFCE, as the lead regulator of HE, had its role and legal powers embedded in various acts of Parliament, including the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and the Higher Education Act 2004 (ibid). It devolved responsibility for the assessment of quality in education providers to the QAA.

The introduction of tuition fees in 2012 led to an increased focus on how quality in HE was managed and verified. Between 2011 and 2013, institutional scrutiny increased, with the introduction of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2013-2018*, and a new method of institutional review applicable to degree-awarding bodies in England and Northern Ireland, and (with some variation) in Wales (QAA, 2018a). In 2012, HEFCE introduced Key Information Sets (KIS), data managed by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) (OFT, 2013). KIS include student satisfaction data extracted from the NSS (Coughlan, 2011), "designed to meet the information needs of prospective students" (HEFCE, 2012). These were published on the UNISTATS website and had direct implications for future student choice and university positioning. Student experience, student engagement and student voice all became synonymous with initiatives to meet the demands of students as fee-paying consumers, and the associated rhetoric communicated a message to students about the paramount importance of their experience as consumers (Barnett, 2018):

> A greater share of universities' funding now comes directly from students and this creates higher expectations from students about their experience, including information about degrees and courses available to applicants, the choices on offer, students' rights as consumers, and how complaints by students about universities are handled.
>
> (OFT, 2013:2)

Student charters and student feedback took on a new importance in empowering students whilst they were at university (BIS, 2011); and consulting students as part of the QAA Institutional Review became integral to the process.

The focus on marketisation of HE was ramped up in 2015, when David Willets

committed to the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in the Conservative Party Manifesto (Universities, UK, 2019); and in May 2016, the government white paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (BIS, 2018) was published. In 2017, the TEF was given statutory status by the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA). The first full provider and subject-level TEF ratings were to be awarded in 2021 (Universities, UK, 2019). Teaching Excellence was about providing a measurement of "the things students care about…the TEF also encourages providers to work with their students to identify, pursue and maintain excellence" (OfS, 2018).

In 2018, The Department for Education closed HEFCE (HEFCE, 2018) and created the Office for Students (OfS), the new regulator of HE in England and the operator of the TEF (OfS, 2018). The QAA retained its contract as Reviewer of Higher Education Standards (QAA, 2018a), the designated quality body (DQB). The Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England (OfS, 2018) established a risk-based approach with provider-level regulation to enforce expectations and core practices determined in the March 2018 revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2018b). Student voice features as a core practice in the Quality Code, with a requirement for providers to give evidence that: "The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience" (ibid). However, strategy for student voice practice was left to provider interpretation.

Student voice and accountability systems

Arthur (2009) gives the two focuses of student evaluation as teacher professionalism and teacher performativity. She contrasts discourses of teacher professionalism – professional ethics, collegiality, social responsibility and good practices (Sanguinetti, 2000 in Arthur, 2009) – with discourses of performativity – value for money (efficiency), accountability (outcomes), international competitiveness and market discipline. Mockler and Groundwater Smith (2015) suggest that there exists a narrow and impoverished view of education that is encapsulated in a compliance agenda where evidence-based practice is used for quality assurance and the process is informed by

a misappropriation of Stenhouse's (1983) person-centered notion of evidence-based teaching. Evidence-based practice, they suggest, serves education poorly, but serves this kind of compliance agenda well (ibid). Mockler and Groundwater Smith (2015) make the point that audit cultures undermine the real community values expressed in student voice. While such a culture supports the systematic collection of student voice, such collection can all too easily be confined to peripheral locations, the canteen for example (ibid).

Fielding (2010:66) suggests that what he names high performance student voice is "largely an instrumental undertaking orientated towards increased measurable, organizational performance", emphasising the functional at the expense of the personal (Fielding, 2016). What is more, Barnett (2018) comments that, with the measurement of trivial things, learning analytics seeks to impose a performative culture and behaviorist thinking on students. This, Fielding (2001) suggests, may instill in students a more demanding "greedy obtuseness" (Fielding 2016:2) as their demands mirror the rhetoric they absorb. Furthermore, Wisby (2011:38) suggests that the trend towards personalisation further endorses consumerist behaviour in an "educational supermarket". When I have mentioned that student voice is the subject of my educational doctorate research, I have met with the response "How are your National Student Survey (NSS) scores?" This understanding of student voice as synonymous with NSS scores serves as an example of how student voice is being misinterpreted and misused by connecting it to student evaluations and divorcing it from its agentic possibilities.

The NSS has gained status as HE marketisation has gathered pace, and in England, the associated hike in tuition fees has led to its inclusion as a measure of the quality of teaching judged by the TEF. With its ability to provide a measure of the student experience, and its completion quotas impacting upon university funding, the NSS and undergraduate provision have become the strategic foci of student voice, and there has been a focus on NSS dissatisfiers. Regarding unsatisfactory NSS scores as an indicator of weak provision is problematic. NSS reporting has been criticised as far removed from the departmental collection of feedback; and its generalised nature

makes it difficult to pinpoint dissatisfaction in “a picture of great variability – variability within and across universities, within and across disciplines and within and across course teams” (Hounsell, 2008:2).

Harvey (2003), in referring to his 2001 NSS advisory report to HEFCE (Harvey, 2001), suggests that the NSS has the potential to add to the range of statistical tables drawn on without providing useful information or informing the continuous improvement process. Harvey (2003) defines the two functions of student feedback as: internal, to fuel continuous improvement; and external, to provide information for a public accounting procedure and for prospective students. In 2008, Harvey was suspended from his role as director of research and evaluation at the Higher Education Academy for criticising the NSS as “a hopelessly inadequate improvement tool” (Gill, 2008:1).

The pressure exerted by accountability systems has the potential to favour short-term solutions with a focus on improving low scores. This may, as previously noted, lead to surface compliance (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). NSS data is collected during a survey period from January to April, and results are released between July and October, presenting a disconnect between this student voice channel and action. Furthermore, students surveyed will have graduated by the time the results are published; so any action taken will be evident to the next generation of students, who may well benefit, but may not be associated with a “You Said, We Did” response to their departed peers’ feedback. The tendency to focus on metric scores has the potential to impact on areas deemed to be a success in the year of the survey, as work strands subsequently focus resources on improving weak scores, thus closing out various points of dissatisfaction in favour of the latest problem (Williams, 2009). As Dr Joan O' Mahony, Academic Lead, Retention, at the Higher Education Academy posits, by focusing on data sets, there is a risk of excluding groups of students:

> it’s important to say that of course data should be interrogated, but if we query data for the sake of it, without focusing on what is missing, on what is poorly presented, on how it can be disseminated or enhanced, and if we are doing that in response to data relating to one group of students and not another, then that is a problem…[we should] consider more what we are doing to address dangerous spaces, aggressive spaces, racist spaces.

(O' Mahony, 2017:1)

Following five TEF pilots, student voice, as measured by NSS data, was added to the TEF metric mix, with a note to the effect that the NSS questions were revised in 2017 and as UNIAC (2018), the internal audit and assurance service for universities states: "HE providers have been explicitly and publicly measured on how well their students think they engage with and respond to their views". Discourse here is further embedding instrumental compliance.

Whilst HEIs need to be accountable to funding bodies and to capture the views of students, it is questionable how authentic the contributions they collect from students are, and the extent to which these are subsequently used to inform and transform practice. For transformative learning, authentic student voice needs to be conceptualised within a culture of participatory practice, where students' voices are active, enabling them to join the institutional conversation on educational matters, rather than appropriated, tailored and selected to tell a tale in the institutional narrative. If we capture student voice for performativity purposes alone, we perpetuate the cynical use of students as objects who are passive throughout their educational journey (Fielding, 2004).

Staff and accountability systems

In my own professional practice, as previously highlighted, drawing on discourses about improving the student experience and about related performative practices of accountability included in the students' feedback meant that trying to get staff to trust a change in student agency prompted a counter discourse and was challenging. The literature illuminates these challenges. Emotional responses to student evaluations have been identified as impacting upon the ability of staff to be honest about, and deal with, such evaluations when they are negative. "Responses to the flow of performance information can engender individual feelings of pride, guilt, shame and envy" (Ball, 2003:221). What is needed is a culture that recognises negative feedback for its learning potential, rather than instilling a fear of being answerable to comments, or even a fear of retribution (Nygaard and Belluigi (2010).

Debates about the validity and reliability of student evaluations bring up the question of assessment biased in favor of popular and lenient lecturers, which Arthur (2009) suggests leaves academics with difficulty deciding whether to take the findings seriously and act on them. For improvements to take place, student feedback has to be relevant to student learning; and academics need to have the skill to interpret feedback accurately and to translate it into improvements. This is a skill there is little guidance on in universities (ibid). Richardson (2005) concurs, pointing out that the routine collection of student evaluations does not in itself lead to any improvement in the quality of teaching, but that it can help in the professional development of individual teachers when supported by an appropriate process of consultation and appraisal.

Murphy and Skillen (2013) apply Habermas's (1987) colonization thesis to explore the impact of educational accountability mechanisms on the working lives of academics. The academics described in Murphy and Skillen's research perceive themselves as undergoing a malevolent temporal impact as they struggle to meet the demands of a quality assurance audit culture. Temporal pressure leaves no space or time in which to reflect and decide on what measures to implement (Manon, 1995). This leads to task dilution, and to a lack of time for the interactions necessary to develop quality relationships with students: "their time to know their pupil is under threat" (ibid:91).

Critics suggest that students are not equipped to make judgements on learning and teaching (Arthur, 2009; Arthur, 2010; Williams, 2013), and that this leaves academics dismissing feedback as unworthy of their attention (Arthur, 2009). Consulting with students within a learning cycle requires of academics the ability to judge if changes are necessary and the point at which learning has taken place. Students need to give feedback when they are satisfied that they have conscious competence (Howell,1982) and that their voice is incorporated and appropriate to add value to the learning environment. This is dependent upon feedback methods. In asking students to give feedback on their learning, we need to be able to have a dialogue that mediates the feedback and considers (rather than reacts to) comments through a lens that encompasses lecturers' experience and helps lecturers translate the comments as part of a process of learning. This process of learning may not be apparent to learners,

who may be unconsciously incompetent, i.e. lack awareness that they do not know (Howell, 1982) until they have completed a scheme of module work:

> Lecturers make decisions on what content to cover, in what order, how to go about teaching it and how to assess whether or not students have learnt it, based upon their deep understanding of a particular subject. It is the discipline-specific body of knowledge that primarily dictates pedagogical approaches. It's only when you have that knowledge that you can begin to pass judgement on what and how to teach.
>
> (Williams, 2013:1)

Furthermore, comments need to be considered in the moment they are received, so that both parties may take in emotional and environmental factors. Campbell (2011) makes the point that students value the opportunity to contribute their perspectives on issues that impact upon their learning. Conversely, Williams (2013) questions students' interest in engaging their voice in curriculum matters, suggesting that this lack of interest, despite efforts to engage student voice, is a demonstration of their lack of interest or motivation to shape their education:

> The lengths universities go to encourage student engagement - and, indeed, the establishment of the new Student Engagement Partnership Unit - are actually recognition of the fact that, in general, students do not rush to participate in such initiatives. Often bribery is needed to ensure participation. Students will be given Amazon vouchers or printing credits for completing the National Student Survey (NSS). The provision of catering will be the key selling point for recruiting students to attend committee meetings. Perhaps students simply have better things to do with their time than worrying about the management of their institution. Or maybe students recognise that, despite the rhetoric, they are not equal partners with their lecturers.
>
> (Williams, 2013:1)

I am interested to understand why students are reluctant to engage in student voice processes and to offer insights into their experience of partnership practice.

Locating student voice

This section on locating student voice represents my literature search at a time when the performative landscape was pervasive and was interrupting developmental initiatives with students. I was eager to understand the landscape and academics'

constructions and experience of student voice. I start this section by teasing out the notion of student voice, and then its organisational location, before moving to problematise students as partners: the authenticity of their voice; and their agency in establishing participatory practice.

The democratic values of student voice underpinned my student voice practice, and I worked to break down barriers to students exercising their voice through developmental initiatives. Student voice was attributed to practice with students as co-creators in research and community initiatives that built the students' social capital. I was working to change culture in a government-imposed landscape of increasingly pervasive neoliberal accountability. It appeared that student voice initiatives, whilst opening up opportunities for students ontologically, were being interrupted by the needs of accountability. Mechanisms for enabling the student voice became the vehicle for public information and the measurement of quality in teaching performance. My work with students opposed the micropolitics of power. Working in partnership with students led to students becoming partners, and I was interested to explore this concept further.

Nelson (2014) makes the point that academics and students have made a tremendous investment of time and self in student voice, and yet the purpose of student voice remains unclear in related policies and processes. Freeman (2014) notes that student voice has different meanings for different people, and Seale (2010) notes a lack of clarity and a variance in interpretation of SV that present a barrier to its practice. She suggests that understanding the notion of student voice is fundamental to unlocking its transformational potential (ibid). Fletcher defines student voice as: "any expression of any learner regarding anything related to education" (2014:2). This provides an example of holistic articulation and could count as anything and everything related to students' curriculum creating a barrier to identifying student voice practice.

The curriculum is everything that impinges upon students' ability to learn, to acquire the body of knowledge they require (Young and Muller, 2013). Differentiating theoretical knowledge from experience was central to Vygotsky's (1978) concept of

pedagogy, as was the capability to transcend the limits of that knowledge in the future. Students no longer take a linear approach to their education, and institutions need to take a holistic approach to student learning (Weaver, 2008; Montgomery, Karagianni and Androutsou, 2016). Montgomery, Karagianni and Androutsou (2016) suggest that learning occurs through the organisational experience as well as the curriculum. Everything from participation in lectures to living life on campus impacts on students' ability to develop and transcend new knowledge.

Student voice may be attributed to a variety of formal and informal contexts, structured and unstructured, making it difficult to define, locate or acknowledge. Breslin (2011) makes the point that informal student voice channels are not given the credence that is afforded to formal channels. It is formal channels that make up the student representation system which is meant to provide students with a way to feed their voice to the higher echelons of the organisation. Hill (2012) suggests that up to 80% of our learning occurs informally, and Breslin (2011) suggests that informal voice opportunities build community, and that giving voice is the purpose of education. If this is the case, it is unclear how effective formal channels are, how students perceive their formal voice opportunities, and, indeed, whether formal systems are sufficiently inclusive for students – whether they allow the latter's authentic take on their learning experience.

Breslin (2011) suggests that those elected to school councils or students' unions become part of these institutions' civic domain, incorporated into their formal politics. Furthermore, there is a tendency to pick the right students for representative positions (Habermas, 1992): those seen by staff to be compliant. Students who are perceived to be problematic are not selected (Thomson, 2011). Opening up student voice opportunities to more students will ensure they are more prepared for life (Breslin, 2011). Diversity within student voice is imperative, as the latter needs to mirror the diversity of the student body. All stakeholders make up the learning community and should be engaged in an "ongoing respectful conversation" (ibid: 77).

We may be discounting everyday practice and missing student voice opportunities

happening informally when we constrain that voice and acknowledge it only within designated and categorised formal practice, without fully understanding the notion. Seeking to locate student voice confirms what academics suggest: that it is difficult to define, locate, access or acknowledge.

Participation

Rudduck and Fielding suggest that the nature of agency requires that students be given the opportunity to find their own voice and develop opinions on contentious issues, rather than come up with a voice "constructed out of exam-acceptable voices" (2006:224). Rudduck's view is of open partnership between teachers and students, with a double necessity for "a communal venturing forth" and "a precondition of effective acting together" (1991:65 in Fielding 2007:324). Fostering a partnership approach to students' evaluations of their learning experience provides a vehicle for dialogue and relationship building. It needs to start through learning conversations, giving students and staff an affinity space to "act together", where the conversation can be "shaped by the dialogic values that underpin its aspirations and dispositions" (Fielding and McGregor, 2005:16).

Partnership became a strategy of neo-liberal policy, of devolvement by the state, and of collaboration in governance and accountability to government through local community involvement (Elwood, 2002), with the marketisation of HE. This translated student voice as "students as partners". Students, via the representation system, gained status in the workings of their university, with representation in the boardroom. In their QAA-commissioned report on student expectations, based on research conducted across the university sector in the year following the introduction of increased higher education fees, Kandiko and Mawer (2013) state that it is students as partners at local course level, rather than at institutional level, that is perceived to be important. This suggests that students are unaware of the landscape of representation and that they do not share an aspiration for partnership in overseeing the curriculum e.g. involvement in course design. Nor do they consider their skills suitable to this purpose (ibid).

Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014:7) explain that co-creating or working in partnership does not involve handing over power, nor does it require a "false equivalency", or "doing everything students say". It involves open communication, sharing insights by listening to each other's voices, sharing responsibility for educational collaboration, co-creating in learning and teaching partnerships, and breaking down barriers that keep students away from their classes (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014).

Rudduck and Fielding (2006) identify power relations, commitment to authenticity, and inclusiveness as "three big issues" underlying the credible development of student voice. Dialogic models of student voice espouse shared decision-making and social responsibility (Wisby, 2011). Fielding (2016) critiques high performance learning organisations as methodological in nature, prioritising the functional over the personal, and suggests that "Intergenerational Learning as Lived Democracy" is more than a collaborative mechanism; it is a way of living the values of freedom, equality and community (ibid), with relationships at the forefront. Fielding's typology, *Patterns of Partnership* (see, 2015b:5; 2016:4), deals with power relations at multiple levels, discussing the interdependence of structures and cultures as a requirement for democratic fellowship. He makes the point that the values of democracy need to be lived, and this needs to be enacted with urgency. He provides suggestions for developing interaction between adults and students at each stage of his typology (ibid).

Authenticity

Mitra, Serriere and Burroughs (2017) suggest that, with a broader range of media channels, people are closing their perspectives to match channels to their viewpoints. These researchers see students' ability to engage collaboratively in critical dialogue as key to widening their perspectives. In thinking about ethical dilemmas, contributing to shared decision-making and learning how to make a difference in their own lives and those of others, students need to live the relevant experiences. This represents a skill for civic engagement (ibid), transforming the self to transform the world (Taylor and Robinson, 2009).

Student voice that authentically informs pedagogical practice is underpinned by the principles of respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility, making higher education a collaborative process of sharing insights and putting them into practice, and of deepening student learning as a mutual learning experience (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014). Fielding (2010:66) refers to a student-centred student voice as: “explicitly and engagingly mutual in its orientation towards widely conceived educational ends that will often include measurable results but are not constituted or constrained by them”. Authenticity enriches the process: listening to student voice, hearing it, and acting on it (Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011:xxxvii). But in order to be enriched by the process, "we must be prepared to hear things that we do not like” (ibid, 2011:xxvii).

To embark in meaningful dialogue, staff and students will need to be capable of mediating a conversation that may require capacity in both parties to compromise or accept the others’ viewpoint. Kreber (2013) makes the point that practices that on the surface appear to be fair may only serve the purposes of a particular group. Economic and practical concerns defining the “business” of education create a disjuncture between meaningful practice and compliance (Kreber, 2013), and power dynamics are masked in the ways that student voice is approached, set up and communicated to students by educators. This situation can come to define authentic student voice for students (Nelson, 2015). Nelson (2015) posits that authentic student voice has become subject to objective truth, and that the quest for objective authenticity in the way we have designed and enacted student voice initiatives over the past 30 years masks power dynamics (Nelson, 2015). Authentic student voice will emerge only if we get our positioning and methods right (ibid).

Currens (2011) presents case study examples of participatory practice from the HE sector in her discussion of transformational initiatives and reflects on the benefits to learners and institutions. She suggests that current provision does not guarantee subsequent action, and she advocates a conceptualisation where students are active partners and co-creators in their learning experience. Seale (2010) suggests that the conceptualisation of student voice is missing a framework to link meaningful

transformation, participation and empowerment to implementation, arguing that participatory methods have the potential to link theory to practice but, as previously noted, clarity in interpretation of the notion of SV is required.

Carey (2011) draws on Fielding's (2001) typology of student participation to discuss the role of representation in student engagement, noting that students tell stories of experiencing a tokenism in gatekeeping that prevents action. At course level, however, they experience trust within their relationships with staff. In a reflection on staff and student narratives of participatory research practice in HE, Seale et al., (2015) conclude that power and resistance render student as partners problematic.

Power

Power was of interest to me from the outset of my work on student voice, and by 2014 the proliferation of student voice studies engaging with power meant the net was widening. In 2015, having conducted my data collection, reduced my Q data to factors, and with a new perspective of student representatives' constructions of SV, I focused my gaze sociologically on power and concepts relating to the social construction of student identities relative to students' engagement with student voice. This section of the literature review establishes a conceptual framework for factor interpretation to help me address the research questions presented at the end of my literature review.

In 2014, the HE environment was becoming increasingly influenced by student voice as a measure of university quality. Student submissions became part of the QAA HE Institutional Review, and by 2019 student voice was established as a TEF metric. I had moved to an academic quality role, with oversight of, and opportunity to make a difference in, student voice practice. My interest in power was to understand how it manifested in student voice practice; and my EdD presented an opportunity to look for this understanding as part of my research, the purpose of which, as previously stated, was to see student voice as authentic and participatory practice. To inform my interpretive framework for exploration of students' narratives of their lived experience, I decided to review a range of complementary theorists for my sociological gaze.

Fielding's (2004) work suggests that if there is no acknowledgement of the relationship between power and student voice mechanisms, it is possible to disguise complex and, at times, manipulative relationships, which may have significant implications for students involved (Fielding, 2004; Freeman, 2014). Fielding (2004) discusses an homogenised and undifferentiated notion of student voice whereby voice accommodates and advantages the privileged in society, with the danger of accommodating the status quo. Students may be oblivious of how their views have been shaped by hegemonic forces that may operate against their own best interests (Kreber, 2013).

Fielding (2001; 2004) identifies three ways in which voices can be used for the purposes of those in power: accommodation, accumulation and appropriation. When voices are appropriated, they are used to legitimise the dominant group's position (Fielding, 2001; Freeman, 2014). Through accommodation, voices are reconstructed to conform to the status quo (Fielding, 2001; Fielding and Rudduck, 2002). Accumulated voices are used to enhance the process of containment and control (Fielding, 2001), and "consultation or participation are described as tokenistic, manipulative or merely decorative" (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002: 5). Fundamental to appropriation is the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and that the student plays an active role in its construction. (Re)appropriation occurs when the student has adapted the information in a way that is meaningful to them and they can use the knowledge as their own (Freeman, 2014).

> I would suggest that too often those in power are listening because through that process they gather more information which can then be used to enhance the process of containment and control (accumulation), or assist in the process of re-describing or reconfiguring students in ways that bind them more securely to the status quo (accommodation), or, indeed, reaffirm the powerful in their superiority and confirm students in their existing lot (appropriation).
>
> (Fielding, 2001:103)

According to Cook-Sather (2006), issues of power, communication and participation are central to SV. She suggests that advocates of representing a group of students with one voice run the risk of silencing some of these students, as the monolithic

quality of the activity presumes homogeneity and overlooks the differentiated needs and perspectives of the students (ibid). “The power of their ‘voice’ is mediated and diluted as it is channeled into ‘safe’ spaces and managed by more powerful ‘voices’” (Hadfield and Haw, 2001:497). There is a dichotomy between student involvement and the need to maintain social order, to encourage “pupils showing obedience to authority and correct behavior” (Bartlett and Burton, 2016:17).

In 2015, Seale et al., noted that power in relation to student voice in HE was under researched, with few studies in HE engaging with issues of power and resistance in relation to students, as well as the factors at play giving them “permission” to use their voice in different HE contexts. By this time, Bourdieu and Foucault were becoming increasingly visible in studies on education and voice.

Bourdieu’s work is used as a set of thinking tools (Grenfell, 2012) to interrogate social realities in contemporary contexts and (re)appropriate these social realities in creative ways, thus “putting Bourdieu to work” as a “disruption in the sociological imagination” (Burke et al., 2016:1). Bourdieu’s social theories have been criticised for their pessimistic tendency (James, 2015); and habitus has been misrepresented as determinist (Mills, 2008), intellectual hairspray (Hey, 2003 in Reay, 2004) and “habitual habitus” (Reay, 2004). In defense of this criticism, many (including Bourdieu himself) have pointed out that the work does not offer a grand theoretical system, but rather it is a set of related theoretical tools (James, 2015), to be used as an agent of change (Mills, 2008).

Similarly, Foucault (1991: 90-91) suggests in his invitation: “What I say ought to be taken as propositions, game openings, where those who may be interested are invited to join in. They are not meant as dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc”. Foucault is used to problematise power and student voice (Freeman, 2014; Nelson 2015). As Stainton Rodgers (2011) suggests, Foucault’s micropolitics of power allow the researcher to scrutinise institutions in relation to how power is exercised and resisted in the interactions and relationships of stakeholders in their everyday processes. Power relationships become more visible when power is invested within

specific institutions, because that is where “it really begins to prosper” (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983: 185).

I turned to a selection of Bourdieu and Foucault’s tools that considered structures and social practices at the macro level. They were particularly relevant to the work I was doing with students, and I was looking to understand how to affect a culture change in meetings. Field, capital and habitus provide a way in to consider how power working at the macro level affects students at the micro level. There is a link here with Foucault’s work. Examination of the pervading nature of discourses, and how this plays out on subjects and their subjectivity, is pertinent to how students may enact student voice practice within the university space.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is his attempt to bridge structure and agency, and it operates through an impenetrable relationship that Bourdieu (1984: 101) illustrates as a triad: “[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice” (in Burke, 2016). Capital (economic, social and cultural) is used to determine an individual’s position within a social hierarchy or space that Bourdieu conceptualizes as a “field”, affecting life chances, experience, aspirations and expectations (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Burke et al., 2016). Bourdieu suggests that to understand practices it is necessary to understand both the evolving fields within which actors are situated and the evolving habitus that actors bring to their social fields of practice (Grenfell, 2012:52).

Bourdieu’s analogy of game and notion of “strategy” are used to explain the “active and creative nature of practices” (Grenfell, 2012: 53). A field of practice is a “field of struggles” (Grenfell, 2012: 53), where actors enter without prior knowledge of the other actors and rules of the game and optimize their position by developing a “feel for the game” (ibid). Entering an unfamiliar field presents disquiet, insecurity and uncertainty for students (Reay, 2005), an “out of field experience” (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009: 1110), and this includes the ability to maintain connections with peers and the wider community (ibid).

When habitus matches the social context of the field and there is understanding of the

underlying rules of the game, the “fish in water” concept is evolved (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 235; Grenfell, 2012: 56). In this social space, habitus finds habitus (Oliver and Reilly, 2010 in Thatcher and Halvorsrud, 2016) and this keeps students in their comfort zone. When their habitus does not match the field in which they have evolved, the fish has to work out how to operate in this new field as a “fish out of water” (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009: 1107; Grenfell, 2012: 56). This notion has implications for social dominance (ibid). Knowing the rules of the game is the central component in navigating a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Burke, 2016). This field, translated from the French *le champ*, is a battlefield, signaling a site of competition and aggression in which a group or individual needs to negotiate their position (Burke et al., 2016).

In contemplating partnership with students, staff and management have a structural advantage (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). The rules of the game are shrouded in doxa, the “pre-verbal taken for granted” (Bourdieu, 1990: 68), and consultation assumes a degree of social and linguistic confidence that not all students have or feel they have (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). Symbolic capital is the accumulated capital that a person has in a specific situation and its magnitude is determined by the capital resources that others hold in the same situation. Symbolic violence occurs when agents fail to accumulate particular forms of capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 :4; Connolly and Healy, 2004; James, 2015; Burke et al., 2016). There is a problem when students are introduced into fields with which they are unfamiliar, such as meetings. They have unequal resources of capital to “play the game” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 101), which renders them unconsciously incompetent (Howell, 1982), unaware of the micropolitics at play.

> Every power to exert symbolic violence i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.
>
> (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977:4)

The amount of capital possessed by actors directs pre-reflexive action, a “feel for the

game", which leads to the field of possibilities (Burke, 2016:19) and removes the element of chance from the games we play. Academic success depends on the acquisition of social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

A field is a dynamic site where habitus and capital interact (Burke et al., 2016). Objective positions are determined by the amount of capital possessed by actors, who compete to gain a monopoly of the species of capital that is most effective in the particular field (Bourdieu, 1986). "Like a game, a field has rules for how to play, stakes or forms of value (i.e. capital), and strategies for playing the game" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:101). In producing a "rhetoric of objectivity", the discursive strategies of agents, particularly rhetorical effects aimed at producing a front of objectivity, depend on the symbolic forces between fields and capital resources that membership grants to participants (ibid: 257).

Objective relations determine:

> Who can cut somebody off, ask questions, speak at length without being interrupted, or disregard interruptions, etc., who is condemned to strategies of denigration (of interest and interested strategies) or ritual refusals to answer, or to stereotypical formulas.
>
> (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 258)

Social capital represents resources based on group membership, relationships and networks of information and support (Grenfell, 2012). Cultural capital is the acquisition of knowledge, experience or connections formed in childhood and accumulated over a person's life course that enable them to succeed more, and to be more familiar and at ease in the use of institutionalised and valued cultural forms, than someone with a different set of knowledge, experience or connections (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). Although capital can be acquired, it flows from habitus (ibid). Habitus is restructured, transformed in its make-up by the pressures of objective structures (Grenfell, 2012).

Bourdieu describes habitus as a "system of durable, transposable dispositions" (1977: 72). Habitus is a cognitive or mental system of structures, an internalised embodiment

of external social structures acquired over the course of a lifetime –norms, values and dispositions (Burke, 2016). Its formulation takes place within the family. Dispositions formed in early life do not provide much room for agency (Burke et al., 2016), but assume an institutionalised form through the agency of education (Grenfell, 2012). This is the structure through which we produce our thoughts and actions, which in turn create our external structures, the social world (ibid), our “socialized subjectivity” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:126).

Habitus is homologous to the objective structures of the world (Reay, 2004). So, if the objective structures of the world approve domination in an individual habitus, then the resulting misrecognition is not recognized, because it was not previously “cognised” within the range of dispositions of the habitus of the person confronting it, and may be maintained with the complicity of the subjugated social agent (Bourdieu, 2000; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The submission of students is most often not a conscious concession to the forces of hegemony. Rather it resides in the unconscious fit between their habitus, the field they operate in, and their inability to accumulate particular forms of capital. This is the concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977:4; Connolly and Healy, 2004; James, 2015; Burke et al., 2016). Students play a role in reproducing their own subordination through the gradual internalisation and acceptance of those ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Connolly and Healy, 2004), allowing the dominator to legitimise their own position (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Habitus can be similar within groups of people, a collective phenomenon presaged by the presumption that individuals from different backgrounds will have been subjected to a similar environment (Crossley, 2012). Thoughts and actions are constrained because the habitus only suggests what a person should think or do; but people do not act blindly according to habitus, they act on the basis of practical sense (they react reasonably in given situations), that is they apply “fuzzy logic” (Lane, 2000).

Foucault was interested in subject production or subjection as an effect of discourses and power (McHoul and Grace, 1993). A key notion in Foucault’s work is “discourse”,

which loosely translates as a worldview of culture, as established in time and place – the “epoch of space” (Lock and Strong, 2010:246). Discourse in the Foucauldian sense is positioned as the relationship between bodies of knowledge (truth) and disciplinary practices (McHoul and Grace, 1993), whereby knowledge construes the social, political and historical conditions under which statements come to count as truth. Nelson (2015:9) identifies that “regimes of truth” from dominant messages, discourses on how student voice should manifest in practice, cloud judgement on how student voice should sound. Nelson (2015:9) notes that:

> the identification of ways in which the dominant messages promoted as authenticity in student voice discourses can also discipline students and teachers and lead, if not challenged, to student voice being a codified set of practices ‘done to’ students and teachers in ways that promise influence but in practice entrench domination in new forms.

Nelson (2015:9) suggests that “current student voice discourses can run the risk of doing student voice to students by conceptualising student voice predominantly from an adult perspective”. If we capture student voice for performativity purposes alone, we perpetuate the cynical use of students as objects passive in their educational journey (Fielding, 2004). In channeling student voice into systematic mechanisms, “we continue to encourage student voice, so long as the debates and arguments are within the confines of the university, and for the purpose of academic learning” (Housee, 2018:116). We are applying a reductionist approach, constraining voice to fit into organisational structures in which, from a structure and agency (structuralist) perspective, the ability to act as a free agent is dictated by the structure (Barker and Jane, 2016), and power is used to objectivise subjects (Foucault, 1982).

Normative discursive regimes construct associated norms of practice (Lock and Strong, 2010; Allan, 2013) as subject positions where regimes of social control impose restrictions on who a person can be (Stainton Rogers, 2011) and produce “docile bodies”: subjected and practiced bodies (ibid: 182), objects of the discourse system they are defined by (Lock and Strong, 2010), “subjects that fit” (Foucault, 1978; Lock and Strong, 2010:247). Their internal consistency provides “spaces” of legitimacy of what may be expressed as “the way things are”. Not expressing is dual-faceted, and

deviation from what is acceptable leads to conflict between those within the culture who have positions of power and those who do not (ibid). Disagreements with a higher power may have consequence (Lock and Strong, 2010). Fejes (2013) suggests that technologies of power aim to normalise and shape subjects who know their views are being monitored. The latter shape themselves into self-scrutinising subjects, trying to say the right thing, aspiring to fit the norm (ibid). In this way, students mirror and clone the hegemonic norm (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009).

This section has problematised power within social space. Both Bourdieu and Foucault highlight the effects of power on the ability for social action. While Foucault's emphasis is a macro structuralist view, this is useful for understanding how governmentality impacts upon the university. Bourdieu is useful for understanding power at the micro level within the university space as he connects to identity via habitus, inequality in capital and power struggles within everyday cultural practices. The two, however, are similar in the way they see power's influence on the subjectivity of social actors: Foucault through dominant discourses, and Bourdieu through symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977:4; Connolly and Healy, 2004; James, 2015; Burke et al., 2016). This framework provided me with the tools to understand the impact of power on the practice of students in my study.

Having problematised power in forms that explained the subjugation of students, I looked to the literature for a counter position on power that would inform my interpretive framework and illuminate possibilities for agentic student voice practice. Foucault positioned power as something that can be used to empower individuals (Lemke, 2002) and this idea has been expanded to consider positions that represent the complexities of becoming self. In the next section I examine these complexities in relation to developing students' epistemic becoming. These ideas inform my interpretation and conceptualization of power relations within student voice space

Becoming self

Barnett (2009) posits that in the development of self, students need to produce two kinds of voice: pedagogical and metaphorical. A pedagogical voice is heard by others,

an autonomous voice with a purpose. The disposition of a will to speak (Barnett, 2009) necessitates the engagement of the speaker's thoughts and feelings (Barnett, 2007). A metaphorical, educational voice defines a critical being (ibid). A serious encounter with knowledge can have implications for becoming, where epistemology has ontological implications (Barnett 2009:435). Using such voice, the student engages with knowledge, making it their own, and feels recognised as a person (Barnett, 2007). Unless the student develops voice, or a willingness to speak, becoming may be unduly limited (Barnett, 2009).

Barnett (2009:438) provides ten "principles for nurturing student being" within curricula for the pedagogic formation of epistemic (that is, knowledge-based) dispositions and qualities (see Figure 2.1). Dispositions describe a person's temperament, denoting the way someone behaves; the features and traits that form an individual's nature. These can range from nervous to assertive (Barnett, 2018), and according to Barnett's (2009) principles, requires students to engage in student voice in order to develop resilience, openness, self-discipline, authenticity and integrity. Qualities are personality traits or characteristics and make up the student's inner morals and values, and student voice should provide the necessary exposure to critical dialogue for nurturing these dispositions of being. "Finding a voice" engages with issues of identity, (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006:224) and becoming and Barnett (2018:100) suggests that "liquid learners" will require multiple identities and the formulation of his suggested dispositions and qualities to move freely across the boundaries presented by the challenges of this "liquid world".

The concept of identity is about students being a person in the world – "who one experiences being, and how one relates to, and wants to be experienced by others" (Illeris, 2014:1). Lachicotte (2009:224) defines identity as "a sense of self-as-actor, where the sense is always relative to a particular frame of activity". Identity is a transit point between activity and actor (ibid), and student voice should facilitate this transition by providing difficult spaces for students to develop these aforementioned dispositions and qualities (Barnett 2009, 2018). Democratic student voice embraces the "principles

for nurturing student being" (Barnett, 2009:438) by opening up spaces for students' critical dialogue where they can develop self agentically.

1) be sufficiently demanding, such that 'resilience' may form;

(2) offer contrasting insights and perspectives, such that 'openness' may develop;

(3) require a continual presence and commitment (even through course regulations) on the part of the student, such that 'self-discipline' may come about;

(4) contain sufficient space and spaces, such that 'authenticity' and 'integrity' are likely to unfold. In turn, so far as pedagogy is concerned, the following principles form themselves, namely that pedagogies should:

(5) require students to engage with each other, such that 'respect for others', 'generosity' and a 'preparedness to listen' might be engendered;

(6) make explicit the relevant standards such that 'carefulness' and 'restraint' might ensue;

(7) be encouraging, such that a student might develop the 'preparedness to keep going forward' and 'hold (herself) out to new experiences';

(8) enthuse the students, giving them new spirit, and so usher forth their 'will to learn';

(9) require students to put forward their own profferings in order that the 'courage' to take up a position and stake a claim might be developed;

(10) require students to give of themselves and be active in and towards the situations that they find themselves in and so develop 'a will to engage'.

Figure 2.1: Principles for nurturing student being (Barnett, 2009:438).

To nurture student being, the shift is from a world dominated by questions of epistemology – understanding the nature of the world we live in – to ontology – understanding the sorts of world we can live in and by what criteria we can decide how one might be preferable to another (Lock and Strong: 2010:8). Barnett (2007) calls for an ontological turn: instead of knowing the world, being in the world needs to take primary place (Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007). As such, it represents epistemology in the service of ontology (ibid). Barnett argues for presenting "awkward spaces to and for students" (2005:795) in order to enable them to deal with the "strangeness" they inevitably encounter in an uncertain and unpredictable world (Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007). This strange space is the university, and a change in power structures to produce a newly available discursive realm (Lock and Strong, 2010) for their voice may facilitate speaking.

"Technologies of self", as a counter narrative, opens up an opportunity for students to construct subject positions in a transformational field of action. Noting that I have discussed how power is used to objectivise subjects (Foucault, 1982) and the need to open up space for students' authentic voice, I was interested in ways students could reposition their student voice and I looked for insight from Foucault's explanation. Through technologies of self, Foucault (1988) argues that power should be understood as a "way of doing things", or an "art" that directs the actions of individuals (Martin, Gutman and Hutton, 1988; Nelson, 2014). Foucault saw transgression as different from transformation or transcendence: as an act where, in crossing limits or boundaries, freedom or otherness could be found (Allan, 2013). The self turns itself into a subject (subjectification) rather than "suffering passively at the behest of external impositions" (Lock and Strong, 2010:250).

Subjectification is being open to resistance, students can collectively encourage each other to reposition themselves, using their power for constructive purposes (Stainton Rogers, 2011). This requires students to formulate an alternative; to mobilise their own counter-culture; to draw on discursive resources to oppose the way societal discourses have positioned them; and to have the courage to act (Lock and Strong, 2010). They can survive subjugation to the gaze of dominant practices and resist normative discursive regimes that construct associated norms of practice by "passing" and not getting caught out (Lock and Strong, 2010). Lock and Strong (2010) put forward Bakhtin's (1981) concept of carnival, a cultural communications concept which offers an opportunity to step out of the constraints of normal social conventions, temporarily liberated from the established order and experiencing the suspension of hierarchies; to experience an opportunity for freeness in dialogue (Lock and Strong, 2010). This requires students to be subversive in their student voice practice which, while presenting alternative possibilities for their growth, presents as a barrier to their contribution to pedagogical developments and growth within university practiced space as without their contribution, student voice practice is inauthentic.

Existentialism considers the theme of authentic existence, the idea that one has to feel at home in oneself and one's lived experience, and that some people live

inauthentically outside the public space (Greene, 1995; Hazell and Kiel, 2018) as highlighted above. Inauthentic living can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, to a sort of "mimicry" where one acts as "one should" (Hazell and Kiel, 2018:61), this relates to previous discussion that students are unaware that they are products of socially constructed student voice. "Authentic", in Heideggerian terms, relates more to the identifications, students draw from, and are held to in, communally shared engagements in life, than to the individual self. It utilises the cultural tools and resources at hand to reflect upon and address problematic engagements with life and with others, extending what students understand and using it as knowledge (Lock and Strong, 2010). It is in novel or problematic situations that the possibilities revealed require new tools to revise our understanding of self and environment (Lock and Strong, 2010) and these tools are dependent on opening spaces to amplify students "horizons of understanding" (Lock and Strong, 2010:62).

"Being", for Heidegger, examines the taken-for-granted aspects of human activity and what makes an ontically authentic being possible in the world (Lock and Strong, 2010). Heidegger sees that context is fundamental to how people can act unproblematically in the world, and that when we have problematic engagements with life – for example when we experience anxiety or other distressing emotions – we need to understand how to act differently, in a new way (ibid). Student voice practice provides students with the opportunity for students to engage dialogically with students from different backgrounds and to widen their perspectives on difference. Gadamer (1988) sees language as the medium through which we understand and communicate our experience to others, opening ourselves to possibilities for new meaning and personal change through amplifying the "horizons of understanding" (Lock and Strong, 2010:62). They make the point that people stay within their social networks with a mind closed to other horizons of understanding and this precludes other ways of being as practiced in other contexts (ibid). Different ways of being are opened up by amplifying those horizons (Lock and Strong, 2010) to create places of authentic learning (Kreber, 2013) – that is, by creating "authentic horizons" (Barnett, 2018:103).

De Certeau (1984) is interested in the operations and actions people use every day to resist hegemonic structures and powers by opposing the notion of theoretical space (Reynolds and Fitzpatrick, 1999). He maintains that users can manipulate these mechanisms and may conform to them only in order to evade them (De Certeau,1984). These "ways of operating" constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production (De Certeau, 1984: xiv). De Certeau thinks that human possibilities are made available there (ibid). In “Practices of Space”, De Certeau says that "space is a practiced place” (1984:117). This refers to the kinds of stories we tell about "where"… Stories that fulfill a function by constantly transforming places into spaces or spaces into places (1984:118). De Certeau (1984) is interested in the "in between" space. Applying Foucault’s technologies of power to interpret the view over Manhattan from the 107th floor of the World Trade Centre, he explains how the space below is modified by the subversive figure of a walker, and how, through interpretation, a place with its own rules is transformed into a new active space (Mudimbe, 1991): “he goes here not there…by making shortcuts or detours…by avoiding routes regarded as licit or obligatory” (De Certeau, 1984:98). Deleuze and Guattari (1986) use the term “nomadic” to consider the use of space and people’s relationship to the land they inhabit. They describe the nómos, the expanse outside the city, as “vague” and as having “the consistency of a fuzzy aggregate”.

Deluze and Guattari’s (1986) rhizome, which comprises six principles, with their associated concepts, lines of flight and nomadic thought, has been used as a conceptual metaphor to understand and challenge hierarchies and deprivilege centres of authority (Mackness, Bell and Funes, 2016). “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986:380). It has neither subject nor object. “Fuzzy logic” is an alternative to belonging and non-belonging and may inform learning and teaching “in allowing learners to break free from traditional ways of thinking and working” (Mackness, Bell and Funes, 2016:84) into a different way of being. Deleuze and Guattari (1986) make the distinction between smooth space, which allows nomadic – that is open, free –

movement, and striated spaces, which are sedentary and bordered (ibid). Barnett (2018) suggest that this space needs to allow fluidity in movement for wider spaces of learning.

Mackness, Bell and Funes (2016) used the rhizome as a conceptual metaphor to challenge learners to think outside the box, concluding that the rhizome is a difficult space for learners' becoming, and they draw on Barnett (2007) to suggest that the application of the rhizome to learning necessitates consideration of power distribution in smooth space and the fragility of the will to learn. Barnett (2018) puts forward the idea of liquid learners in his consideration of the rhizomic concept, which he criticises as being static and suggesting may create a monoculture, the cultivation of a single crop or organism. In this idea, he presents student voice as a field of identical plants that will be exquisitely vulnerable to disease and non-development. Because students live in multiple spaces, in many of which they learn informally, they are portfolio learners: they undergo a composite of learning and developmental experiences, and student voice presents as a key learning space. He posits that fluid or liquid metaphors enable learners to flourish (ibid), in wider learning spaces – this is his vision for an ecological university (Barnett, 2018) – a way of thinking differently for the future "characterized by an ecological epistemology" (Barnett and Bengtsen, 2017:10) for the wellbeing of the whole earth. By adopting these ideas to examine students' narratives, my research seeks to explicate how power relations manifest themselves within student voice practiced space and how this affects students' epistemic development.

Research focus and questions

The performative way in which student voice has established itself and is gaining further status on the HE student experience agenda presents the danger of SV losing its transformative learning potential. Student representation on higher education institution (HEI) committees is commonplace, and it appears that students are actively being consulted on their experience and that HEIs are actively working towards the student voice agenda. But there is a tension in the interpretation of active participation, and further understanding is needed of the student voice practiced space and how

students inhabit it – if indeed they do actively inhabit – it – and if they do, the learning potential it affords them.

In this chapter, I describe the landscape in which student voice is located, and where it is increasingly subjected to the principles of marketisation and consumerism. This landscape is one where students are the objects of the discourse, a discourse that can appear authentic to them. This suggests that students' ontological needs are at the service of an epistemology that puts knowledge ahead of the skills required to enable their growth through dialogic encounter.

The literature has identified student voice as difficult to define, locate, access or acknowledge, and has problematised it as socially constructed in social practices that are influenced by power relations. It has suggested that, for the development of agentic student voice, participatory practice requires students to develop the ability to engage in critical dialogue, engaging ontologically with their curriculum in order to deal with the unfamiliar, which they will encounter in an uncertain and unpredictable world (Barnett, 2005).

In my methodological decision-making, I wanted to find a method that could enable students to tell stories of their practices within student voice practiced space, as their voice and their experience is missing from the literature, and this leaves questions about students' lived experience unanswered. In the next chapter, the philosophical underpinning of my methodological thinking is outlined as a response to three research questions arising from the reviewed literature and my practice.

To inform my Q methodology analytical framework, I capture student representatives' expert narratives and use these in the construction of my Q set of statements on student voice. The Q set is also informed by the reviewed student voice literature and my practice insights detailed in chapters 1 & 2.

Research question 1: How do student representatives construct student voice?

The Q set is Q sorted by five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students. I extract three Q factors and using a social constructionist interpretive framework, I position students within university practiced space.

Research question 2: How are students positioned within student voice practiced space?

I use my conceptual lens of sociological theories reviewed in chapter 2, to explicate spatially how power relationships influence the capacity for epistemic becoming through student voice practice.

Research question 3: How do power relations manifest themselves within student voice practiced space?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Since 2011, Q methodological research iterative to a review of the literature has informed my professional practice, which has been designed to engage students in student voice processes and practices at a post-1992 UK university. Q methodology was invented and advanced by William Stephenson in 1935 (Brown, 1980) and published as *The Study of Behaviour: Q Technique and its Methodology* in 1953 at the University of Chicago (Watts and Stenner, 2005; Watts and Stenner 2012). Q methodology became established as one of the first alternative methods to have been developed in psychology (Watts and Stenner, 2012) and is utilised within psychological, social psychological and sociological methodological frameworks.

Q as a social constructionist research tool in the qualitative tradition is designed to explore the subjective dimension of any issue towards which different subject positions can be expressed (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004; Watts and Stenner, 2012). Q methodology is the body of theory and principles that guides the "application of technique, method and explanation", providing a flexible procedure for the examination of subjectivity within an operant framework (Brown, 1980:6). "Subjectivity, understood in operant terms, is simply the sum of behavioral activity that constitutes a person's current point of view" (Watts and Stenner, 2012:26) i.e. what is currently being said about the topic being researched (Watts and Stenner, 2005), allowing the researcher to identify shared viewpoints on a topic of interest (Watts and Stenner, 2012). A qualitative exegesis of the quantitative results in terms of the overall structure, function and implications yields an interpretation of the shared viewpoints (Stenner and Cross et al., 2015). It facilitates processes of personal understanding and discovery (Bass and Brown, 1973; Goldstein and Goldstein, 2005; Stephenson, 1974, 1987 in Watts and Stenner, 2012) to look into people's experience and see it, a snapshot of what is in their mind (Stainton Rogers, 2011), in my study students' subjective perceptions (Watts and Stenner, 2005; 2012) of their student voice practice.

In this chapter I outline my use of Q methodology within a social constructionist interpretive research framework (see Figure 3.1) to understand students' positions on student voice whilst operationalising subjectivity through their engagement in the Q sorting process, such that Q potentiated sustained impact from the outset. Q methodology combined constructivist (factor abstraction) and constructionist (interpretation of emergent factors) approaches as a meaning-making framing device to provide a new understanding of how students inhabit student voice practiced space.

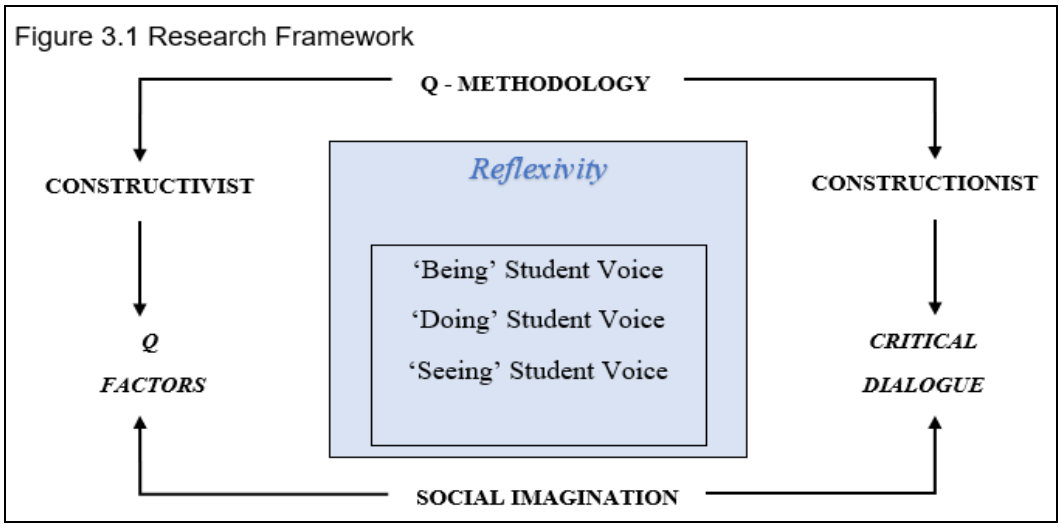

Figure 3.1 Research framework.

Through a procedure of Q sort, Q analysis and factor interpretation, I (re)present students' narratives as viewpoints. Students Q sort 42 propositions on student voice, providing "a medium through and onto which a participant [students in my study] can impress their own meanings and viewpoints" (Watts and Stenner, 2012:64), their depth of experience and unique understanding (Wolf, 2011), making their subjectivity operant. Factors are extracted using PQ Method software; each factor captures a different item configuration (array) shared by (and characteristic of) the students that load onto the factor (Watts and Stenner, 2005), this is the constructivist element of the Q methodology. In the constructionist aspect of Q research I interpret the resultant factors through my social constructionist framework explicating the different viewpoints held by students, those viewpoints enabled students to enter into critical

dialogue, and made it possible for insights and understandings to be made knowable about student voice as narratives, reframing students' stories of their lived experience of student voice through narrative action. Through a final stage of interpretation, I conceptualise these viewpoints within student voice practiced space to illuminate power relations spatially.

In the first two chapters, I established that discursive practices in education have constructed a notion of student voice predicated upon the elevation of knowledge acquisition as product – what students know, and the knowledge universities acquire from students and use for their own purposes – above learning as an emergent process of becoming. These are epistemologies that capture student voice as an evidence base, and objectify students as products, which Fielding (2016:9) positions as "the personal is being used for the sake of the functional".

It follows, therefore, that I needed a research approach that would reject the notion of truth in a natural social world explained objectively using scientific method (Stainton Rogers, 1991). As a social constructionist researcher, I view truth as "socially constructed and power laden" (Nelson, 2015: 3) and as explicated through subjectively understanding social processes and interactions (Stainton Rogers, 1991). I accept that an exhaustive journey to the truth is unlikely to be possible, but I maintain that extending my understanding of the power relations within which students' practice student voice is "a worthy ambition" (Cousin, 2013:6). My research aims to explicate the positions of my students as "actors" in the social context within which they interact.

Social constructionism as a meaning-making framing device

In undertaking this research, I sought ontological insights into students' engagement with student voice in terms of their constructed identity and sense of self. I sought to explore with students their social factor counterparts, gaining insights into why they experienced the world as they did, and how they made sense of it. This knowledge is only visible by looking at what students do with it and how they interact with each other. It is knowledge that everybody knows but it is so familiar nobody puts it into words. Scrutiny asks what's going on (Stainton Rogers, 2011). The study reflects a

view of social constructionism that reads Dewey's "social facts" as an "integral, substantive and objective part of the environment that [students as subjects] … inhabit and encounter" (Watts and Stenner, 2012:43). Such social facts are concretised as part of the landscape/field of play/practiced space of student voice, and as such they influence activities and viewpoints enacted within it.

My research fits within the interpretivist paradigm, which embraces many social perspectives in order to see the world as created by the interactions of individuals and to understand the meanings behind their actions (Burton and Bartlett, 2009; Cousin, 2009). I was interested to examine how, for the particular students who took part, their ontological needs and perspectives might relate to their epistemological engagement with student voice. I needed a research approach that was able to address both in a cohesive way, and hence turned to Q methodology within a social constructionist framework as an approach that aligned epistemologically with my research intentions and my ontological beliefs outlined as my position statement in chapter 1.

Social constructionism as an interpretive research approach is a framework underpinned theoretically by a sociology of knowledge. It is founded in an ontological position that regards social reality as constructed and made real though people's actions. These Berger and Luckmann (1967) saw as three moments in constant interplay: externalisation, objectification and internalisation (Stainton Rogers, 2011). Social reality is socially constructed in what students think, do and say alone and mainly collectively (ibid), and imposed through structures in which they operate where institutional rituals, practices and narratives inform and shape their version of reality.

The meaning-making paradigm of social constructionism emerged from early philosophical examinations of how human beings engaged in constructing and living through their personal constructions (Lock and Strong, 2010). Therefore, it is interesting that current ontological dilemmas facing professional education were presaged by the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger (Thomson, 2001:244 in Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007:679). Heidegger was disturbed by what he saw as a turn to "increasingly instrumentalize, professionalize, vocationalize, corporatize, and

ultimately technologize education". As such, "only what is calculable in advance counts as Being" (ibid). Being for Heidegger is a verb signaling embeddedness in human activity (Lock and Strong, 2010) and it is my aspiration for the students in my research to be embedded in their student voice practice. However, such epistemological engagement is predicated upon students' ontological needs, and as such epistemology is at the service of ontology (Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007; Barnett 2009). Ontology requires reflection with the focus on knowing and changing oneself as a "way of being" reflexively, while epistemology involves reflection on experience to improve practice (Fejes, 2013:64). As such "social epistemology" provides the social context for the creation of new knowledge (Lock and Strong, 2010).

> We argue above that epistemology must be in the service of ontology in higher education programs. The task is incomplete with mere knowledge acquisition. Instead, higher education programs need to re-orient their focus by assisting students to integrate knowing, acting and being. In so doing, emphasis is placed on learning and its enhancement, not on knowledge in itself.
>
> (Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007:686)

(Re)presenting narratives

Cousin (2013) makes the distinction between reflection and reflexivity by drawing upon Schon's (1987) reflection in action to make the point that, while reflection is on practice, reflexivity is about positionality, which broadens the lens. Reflexivity as a social constructionist concept sees me as the researcher "in the thick" of interpretation in research rather than at a distance (Cousin, 2013:3), and I understand that my subjectivity is at the forefront of my interpretation. I acknowledge the gaze of self and others I bring to understand my practice and acknowledge this as my (re)imagined (Cousin, 2009) conceptualization of students' experience in my aspiration for (re)positioned agentic student voice practice.

Stories make experience possible where narrative is used as a (re)framing approach (Frank in Eldershaw, Mayan and Winkler, 2007). Drawing on Frank (2010), Cross (2016:8) uses reflexivity as a narrative approach to reframe students' stories in relation to their doctoral experience, suggesting that "storytelling provides a means of trying to

understand ourselves, our environment, and our relationships in it". In my research reflexivity as a narrative approach (ibid) is adopted to (re)present students' lived experience of student voice through (re) framing their narratives captured in my Q methodology research. The narrative research approach considers the relationship between the researcher and her research subjects (students as research participants), how narrative is developed from an experienced and orally told story into a written text, and the hermeneutic or interpretive nature of narrative research (Moon, 2010).

Brunner (1994) believes that reflection cannot be a mere personal act for the purpose of engendering solutions to the job of teaching. Instead, she envisions reflection as a complex process of "being" and "becoming" (ibid) which aligns with my research purpose as through my sociological lens I examine notions of knowledge, power, voice, and position as they relate to the teaching/learning process (Brunner, 1994). "Narration is the practice of constructing meaningful selves, identities and realities…by disrupting oppressive discourses, stories are constrained but not dictated by them" (Chase, 2011:422). As Frank says, narratives make the world knowable by revealing the effects of how power is taking different forms to make the world knowable (Eldershaw, Mayan and Winkler, 2007. I make sense of students' experience in relation to cultural discourse and treat narratives as a window into the contradictory and shifting nature of hegemonic discourses taken for granted as stable monolithic forces (Chase, 2011). I (re)present students' talk as viewpoints and unpack them using my conceptual framework of authors reviewed in chapter 2, allowing my social imagination to produce a new gaze on taken for granted discourses, "a sociological eye", through which I can (re)present a new vision of their social world as an epistemological rupture (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:251).

For Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009:100), with imagination, interpretation involves listening to a text in dialogic form and recontextualising social action. As the interpreter, I put myself in the students' role and use my theoretical framework to understand social acts better than students understand them themselves, "as a result of conscious forgetfulness of earlier contextualisations". Geelan and Taylor (2006:2) draw on the work of Max Von Manan to explain that hermeneutics allows data to be

generated from lived experience in the real world and to be interpreted "to evoke in the reader a pedagogically thoughtful response…and critical reflexivity about their own pedagogical actions". In *School stories*, they make the point that story allows the truest and richest accounts to be presented, a move from Guba and Lincoln's (1989) trustworthiness to a "heightened sense of the pedagogical consequences of research" (Geelan and Taylor, 2006:2). I use hermeneutic interpretation to elucidate the meaning of the story's students tell of their experiences through their narratives, and as such "social experience is an unending work of … imaginary production" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009:125). As fiction, story aims to re(present) the experience of students, which I reimagine as an interpretation, using my experience, and which the reader (you) will interpret in relation to your own experience (Moon, 2010; Cousin, 2009).

It should be noted that the purpose of the research is to explore what these students are narrating in their talk as the key narrative of the student voice practiced space (Frank, 2010). Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (1990) make the point that a social constructionist position on Q establishes stories or accounts. We live, work, breathe stories. This is what participants do, and they are not necessarily telling the story. Frank (2010) would ask, what work does the story do? Story is an actor in the drama. The students' narrative accounts started a reflexive process which allowed the actors (students) to construct new interpretations to illuminate the meaning of their actions (Colombo, 2003).

Q methodology within a social constructionist framework

Q methodology within a social constructionist interpretive framework is concerned with social or sociological perspectives on meaning-making from shared viewpoints, bodies of knowledge or discourses (Watts and Stenner, 2012) which offer a generative starting point for opening up possibilities for agentic student voice (Nelson, 2015). In Q methodology the discourse about a specific topic is referred to as a concourse, which is conversation, commentary and discourse about everyday life and includes all communication about a specific topic (Brown, 1991). The concourse can be determined in a number of ways, and from primary and/or secondary sources (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The exact number of statements is not pre-determined and is

usually dependent upon the subject matter and the participant group (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

In order to address the three research questions, my research sought the views of students and was conducted with student participants at a post-1992 UK university. Graduate interns collaborated in my research. My concourse on the topic of student voice consisted of 143 propositions derived from reviewed student voice literature, insights from my professional practice and narratives from stage 1 focus groups conducted with student representatives; who co-created in my student voice practice, and whom I recognise as expert participants on this subject. According to Liamputtong (2011:172) focus group "data represents more authentic or closer to the essential meanings of participants lives than data generated by other methods", so it was important to establish an approach that would return students' voice authentically (Cousin, 2009).

My stage 2 participants: students from five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students from the university school within which my student voice project operated Q sorted these propositions in a refined Q set 42 statements (see Appendix 1), into a subjectively meaningful pattern providing their unique perspective of their student voice practice. I use my social constructionist framework to reveal students' positions through their narratives as shared viewpoints on their experience of student voice practice.

Ethics

Ethics clearance informed by BERA (2011) guidelines was gained in 2012, at the start of my Q EdD study. Prior to data collection, information sheets clearly outlined the procedure and provided participants with the opportunity to clarify any part of the process (Blaxter et al., 2001) and to opt out at any stage of the research process (Vaughn et al.,1996). With their informed consent, participants registered their agreement to participate through their completion of a consent form administered in advance of the Q focus group, Q sorting process and post-Q focus group. There are ethical issues salient to the conduct of research involving multiple participants

collaborating in a discussion (Dale and McCarthy, 2006), and these include the lack of anonymity within the group, and the possibly conflicting views expressed therein. The research is underpinned by a participative philosophy that is fundamental to all its aspects. I am cognisant that power relations are problematic in this inquiry and this was a transparent and reflexive aspect of this research (Cousin, 2013). Recognising duty of care to the research subjects (Rugg and Petre, 2007), information which could compromise the participants has been removed through the anonymity of data and narratives. Therefore, the participants are not considered to be vulnerable to the procedures, topic or data provided in the research (Liamputtong, 2011).

My Q methodology research framework is illustrated in Figure 3.2 and detailed below in four stages.

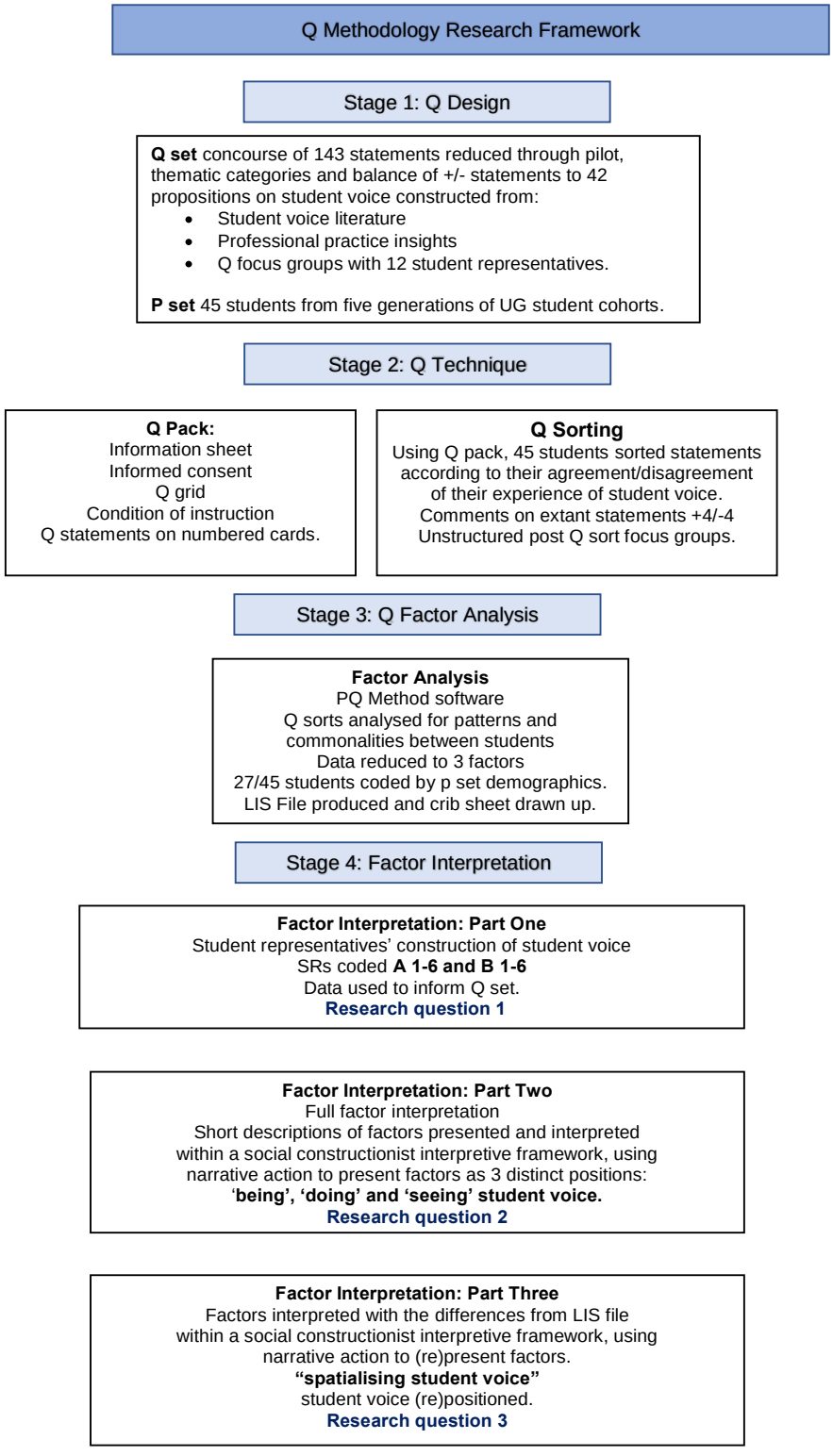

Figure 3.2: Q methodology research framework

Stage 1: Q design.

In 2012, two focus groups were conducted with 12 undergraduate student representatives to inform the construction of a concourse of propositions which made up a third of the final 42 Q set statements. Each FG comprised 6 student representatives (subsequently coded A 1-6 and B 1-6), a population of 36 level 4-6 undergraduate students from the university school within which my student voice project operated were purposively invited to participate, and the resulting 12 participants accepted this invitation. Participants consisted of a generally representative mix of the population in terms of age, diversity, year, mode of study and involvement in their SR role.

Focus group questions (Appendix 2) were designed and piloted with a Students' Union officer and graduate intern prior to the focus group to increase trustworthiness (Cousin, 2009) and practicability (Cohen., Manion, and Morrison, 2011). The research was facilitated by myself and a graduate intern known to the student representatives who had developed participatory meeting skills, including chairing (as part of student voice initiatives at the time), which encouraged students to express and articulate their opinions, a practice Campbell (2011) suggests that students value if they can see that it will impact upon their university experience. Furthermore, the focus groups allowed students to collaborate reflectively with their peers (ibid).

In the role of researcher, I was aware of my position of power in relation to students, and how this would play out in the research space (Cousin, 2013); and so I built a rapport with students in order to enable them to feel comfortable in the research setting (Cousin, 2009). The research took place in the Students' Union, a student-friendly environment and an "affinity space…that supports dialogue, trust and self-efficacy" (O'Donovan, 2010:2-3), at lunchtime, with pizza to incentivise attendance and to help relax the group in the setting. In aiming to get a conversation going between the participants, environmental considerations were key (Cousin, 2013). The design of the FG took this dynamic into consideration and the questions were printed onto cards to mediate the space between myself and student participants, and to allow them to remember the question, which provided further opportunity for

students to join in the discussion. Facilitation was participatory, aiming to be inclusive throughout the process in order to make the process as authentic as possible.

Internal validity is addressed by representing the phenomenon being investigated fairly and fully (Cohen., Manion, and Morrison, 2011), representing the viewpoints of students, and reproducing the student voice authentically with ethical rigour (Cousin, 2009). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) draw upon Winter (2003) to say that validity may be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached and the extent of the triangulation.

Trustworthiness replaces validity in interpretivist research and was achieved through the values of the shared research process, returning the findings to inform student voice practice at the earliest opportunity, and member checking at the final stages of my thesis production (Cousin, 2009). In addition to informing the construction of the Q set, this was my first opportunity to gain understanding of students' lived experience of student voice practice, so I interpreted this data to inform my practice, and I present the result at the start of Chapter 4.

The Q set (or sample) is a miniature of the concourse (discussed above) sorted by each participant according to a subjective dimension such as "agreement/disagreement". The selection of the Q set is more an art than a science (Brown, 1980), and it needs to be broadly representative of opinions on the topic in as much as there is no definitive set of statements and another researcher or structure might have arrived at a different set of statements (van Exel and de Graaf, 2005). What matters is that the subject gives meaning to the statements through the sorting process (Brown, 1993), and as such captures students' viewpoints.

There are variations in the structure of the Q set. Stephenson (1953), in his chapter on samples and their structure, notes that it can be structured or unstructured; indeed, he notes that some of the best work proceeds without structure. In an unstructured sample, structuring is achieved through the balancing of positive and negative statements. Brown (1993) suggests that the balancing of the statements is left to the

researcher, with the importance derived from the meaning given to the statements through the sorting process. If the Q set is broadly representative of the relevant opinion domain on the subject matter, it will afford a general overview of relevant viewpoints “on the subject”, which is all that is required for the purposes of Q methodology (Watts and Stenner, 2005:76).

My Q set was refined through four stages of piloting, with input from my supervisory team, graduate intern and a Students’ Union officer, who worked with me to consider and refine the statements to a Q set of 42 propositions reflecting the breadth of existing knowledge on student voice (refer to Appendix 1). Using a range of 40-80 statements has been cited as standard (Stainton Rogers, 1995), as too few statements may restrict the coverage and reduce the comprehensiveness of their content; and too many may introduce impracticality within the data collection process, due to increased reading and time demands (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Forty-two statements fitted the structure I replicated from van Exel and de Graaf’s (2005) guidance. A resultant five thematic categories were latent in my Q set: power, community, authenticity, processes and agency.

Categories help to establish internal validity in the method by providing structure, balance and representation for concourse development (Watts and Stenner, 2012); but their function is over once the sample has been devised, and as new categories take precedence in the emerging factors (Brown, 1980). In my sample I achieved structure and representation, balance was disturbed in the piloting process which determined the final selection, this is not problematic as the sample conformed with Brown’s (1996) explanation that all Q samples should have at least minimal structuring (implicitly if not explicitly) in terms of positive and negative statements. From a practical point of view, this avoids statements piling up on either the positive or negative side of the Q sort grid if a participant holds an extremely positive or negative view of the topic. I made this refinement in the final stage and my Q Set has an equal balance of positive and negative statements. I was keen to make sure that the Q process would be accessible to students and so I was careful to make sure that the statements were sense checked by students during the piloting process and kept statements short to

help students focus on the propositions in order to deliver the best impact possible.

Participants were recruited from the university school within which my student voice project operated. Five generations of undergraduates (currently studying levels 4-6) and students who had graduated in the previous two years were invited to participate via email response. The participants were a purposive sample (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004) in that they were involved in the discourse and regarded as having personal investment in the subject (Plummer, 2012).

The resulting person sample or p set consisted of 45 students with varied demographics, the aim being to add as much diversity as possible to the p set, increasing and enhancing the likelihood that all factors at issue would have an opportunity to show themselves (Brown, 1999). Appendix 3 contains a summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants: gender (13 males and 32 females); student type (home, EU or international); diversity (indicated by ethnic group); and experience of student representation: 1 represented a current first year and 5 graduated 2 years previously.

Stage 2: Q technique

Q is an exploratory technique with a factor analytic heritage, differing from R method (researcher led objective measurement) in its rejection of the hypothetico-deductive logic (ibid). By inverting Spearman's traditional method of factor analysis technique (Watts and Stenner, 2012) from traits to persons, the population of items (Q Set) is measured or scaled by individuals. Q sorting is the technical process of data collection for factoring.

I made several refinements to my Q technique (Figure 3.3) in order to make the procedure accessible to students (Cousin, 2013).

- Q methodology was employed co-constructively, with graduate interns advising on and participating in the design, implementation and analysis of the Q.
- Q was conducted in a student-friendly space (Students' Union) as a group exercise, through staged instruction, to make sure that the process was followed precisely, statements understood and that the data collected was accurately recorded;

- Statements were kept as short as possible to aid comprehension;
- Students were encouraged to ask for clarification where necessary. In each iteration, clarification was sought for card number 21: Student voice is tokenistic in the way it involves students;
- Unstructured group focus group interviews were conducted at the end of the card sorting process to capture students' views on the Q;
- A post-Q questionnaire was administered to allow for further insight;
- Trustworthiness (Cousin, 2009) was achieved through the provision of the full thesis draft to participants prior to submission. This also afforded the opportunity to discuss reactions to my interpretation and to ensure this insight informed future practice.

Figure 3.3: Refinements for accessibility to students.

In 2014, Q sorting was conducted in five cohort groups at the university and individually by post, for convenience, to provide an opportunity for students no longer at the university to be included in my study. I issued a Q sorting pack (Appendix 4) to students and with my guidance at each stage (Cousin, 2013), Q sorting was administrated to students, who completed the Q sort individually. The research question dictates the nature and structure of the Q set and acts as a condition of instruction for the participants. My Q set out to determine students' lived experience of student voice and the condition of instruction informing the design of my Q set and guiding the sorting process (Watts and Stenner, 2005) was:

To what extent does each statement represent your viewpoint or experience of student voice processes and practices in the university?

Students (p set) made sense of the Q set of 42 statements assigning a ranking position on the rating grid (Figure 3.4) in a fixed quasi-normal distribution, as an inverted pyramid, and according to the face-valid criterion (Brown, 1980, Watts and Stenner, 2006) least agreement/most agreement.

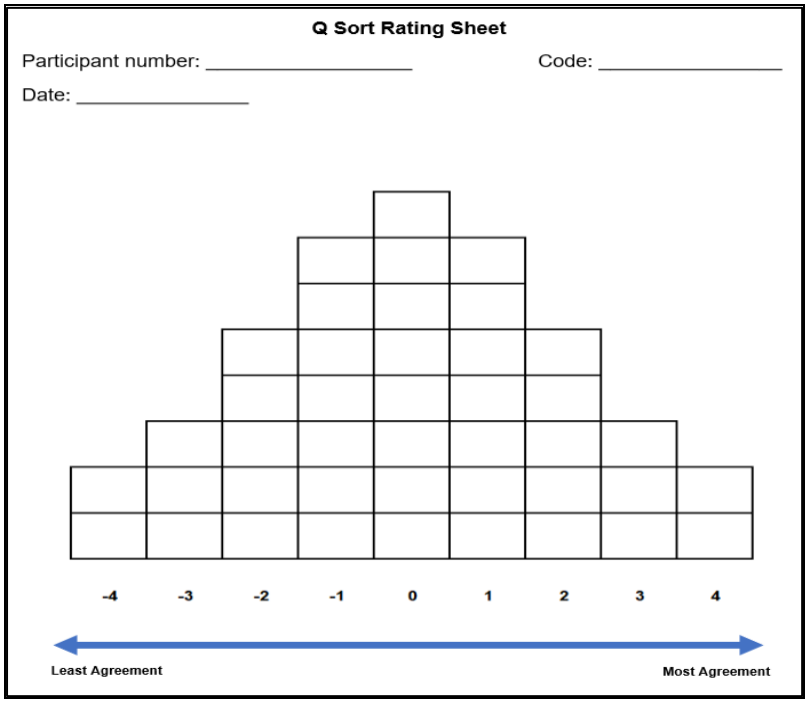

Figure 3.4: Q rating grid.

Students read the statements (population of items), now on numbered cards, and sorted them (scaled relatively) into 3 piles “those with which I least agree”, “those on which I have no strong views”, “those with which I most agree”. A more refined sorting followed using a scale of -4 (least agreement) to +4 (most agreement). In a further stage of sorting, students arranged the three piles on the Q rating grid with a “prearranged or forced distribution” (Watts and Stenner, 2012:17) of relatively few items towards the midpoint and fewer towards the peripheries (Figure 3.5). “This has become a house standard for Q methodologists…it represents a very convenient and pragmatic means of facilitating the subjective evaluations” (ibid).

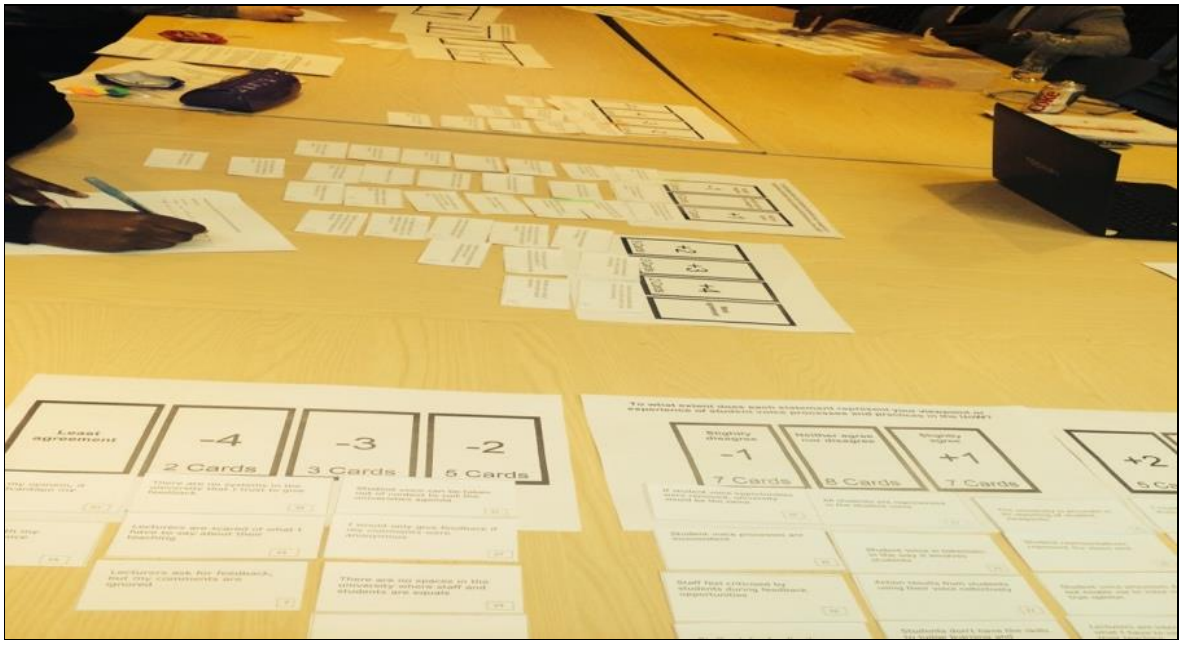

Figure 3.5: Students Q sorting

Interacting with students during the Q allowed me to check accuracy in the method and to clarify detail where necessary. Students were engaged in the method and happy to wait for their peers to catch up where necessary. The Q sorting process had an average duration of one hour.

Supporting qualitative information was collected on comment sheets within the sorting pack in the process of the Q sort by asking students to explain their choice of extant statements: -4, those with which I have least agreement, and +4 those with which I have most agreement. This provided an additional layer of depth to allow deeper analysis at the interpretation stage (Cousin, 2009), to explore and interpret the emergent factors, and to better understand the nature of the shared viewpoints in qualitative detail (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Finally, students recorded their configuration of 42 statements on their Q grid and I checked each array for accuracy before clearing the study away. The completed sorts are captured in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6: Completed Q sort.

Following the individual Q sorting process, unstructured focus group data was collected to provide an opportunity for students to engage collectively in critical dialogue in a discussion about their student voice practice, and this provides rich detail for the interpretation stage of the Q. In my interpretation (chapter 4), students are identified as a post-Q FG. In addition, I captured students' narratives about their experience of completing the Q study (Figure 3.7), their learning from the process (Cousin, 2013), and their immersion in the Q method can be identified, along with their endorsement of Q as an agentic method for collecting feedback from students, making their subjectivity operant.

I've never done anything like this, but I've got to say I really liked it [lots of agreement] - good way of sorting out your views and seeing the importance of them - when you write them down in a questionnaire, you don't put much though into them - I've put so much thought into it.

I'm very opinionated and I wanted to make sure that you got the message that I really agree with this…so yes it was a good way.

More engaging way of looking at things took time and effort I don't take with a questionnaire - just tick, tick and can't be bothered to write in the free text box.

It made me think of examples - when you think in your head as I went along which helped with the qualitative comments - more detail in the answer.

In a questionnaire I tend to stick down the middle whereas with this one I knew what I strongly disagreed with [makes you think about every option].

Discussion about the time passing, and not realising 42 questions have been asked in 1hr 10 minutes.

It's different, interactive - I'm very practical, memorable. With Q you don't think about it, but I know that when it comes to something on SV, I'll remember this.

I was able to apply to my experience.

Two extremes with Q. You try to get away with as little, but you will see I wrote quite a chunk, I was quite enjoying it.

Yes, because it's important as well, and the process we've been through, I wouldn't have been able to say this is what I strongly agree with - what do you really disagree with at Uni.

Figure 3.7: Students' reactions to Q sort.

Stage 3: Q factor analysis

Reliability and validity are central concepts in an R methodology and the instrument can be said to be valid if it measures what it claims to be measuring. Q methodologists discuss reliability and validity with less frequency, although Q delivers, in that it captures the viewpoints or perspectives of its participants in the form of their Q sorts (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Large numbers, which are so fundamental in social research, are rendered relatively unimportant in Q methodology because the emphasis is on the nature of the segments of subjectivity that exist and the extent to which they are similar or dissimilar (Brown, 1991). The results of a Q study are not generalised to the population, but to a specific factor type, that is a generalisation of a particular perspective (Brown, 1980). The statistical and mathematical aspect of Q methodology "serves primarily to prepare the data to reveal their structure" (Brown, 1991:13): data reduction in readiness for qualitative factor interpretation

Through the constructivist part of Q, using PQMethod software, I reduced the data to three factors that enabled students' viewpoints to be exposed. I input each of the students' individual array, recorded as numbers on their completed Q sort grid (refer

to figure 3.6), this required the code I had assigned each participant to anonymise their data and to distinguish demographic characteristics at the interpretation stage (refer to Appendix 3).

I correlated and factor analysed the 45 sorts using PQMethod software – specifically, principal component analysis followed by varimax rotation – to produce a correlation matrix representing configurations of similarity and difference in opinion on student voice as a relationship between Q sort configurations (Watts and Stenner, 2005). There are a number of options for factor rotation, but varimax was deemed suitable for this study as it seeks to provide a sociological perspective and this fits with the constructionist approach to Q (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Therefore, the function of the software was to reduce the data to factors ready for interpretation (Watts and Stenner, 2012).

Participants load onto factors based on the item configurations they have produced (ibid). It is not the group that becomes the study sample; rather, participants load onto the emergent factors (Watts and Stenner, 2005) and become the variables of interest-correlations between each other as factors. The result of a Q analysis is a set of factors each of which identifies a cluster of Q sorts which have been sorted in essentially the same way. Each factor captures a different item configuration shared by (and characteristic of) the participants that load onto that factor (Watts and Stenner, 2006). In Q methodology, the variates are the number of persons whose responses have been factored (Brown 1980). The larger the eigenvalue, the more variance is explained by the factor (Kline 1994). A correlation matrix is simply a way through which the data must pass (numerical treatment) on the way to revealing their factor structure. It indicates in tabular form the extent to which each Q sort is correlated or uncorrelated in terms of significant or insignificant loadings (Brown, 1991), providing a measure of the nature and extent of the relationship between any two Q sorts and hence a measure of their similarity or otherwise (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The process renders the operant nature of the method, with the resulting array representing the participants' subjective stance in relation to the items sorted.

The criteria for identifying effective reduction of the correlation matrix to interpretable factors (Watts and Stenner, 2012) were factor loadings of 0.46 or over. These I calculated as $p<0.01 = 2.58$ ($1/\sqrt{}$number of statements), resulting in a statistically significant correlation at the $p<0.01$ level (Brown, 1980; Watts and Stenner, 2012), with a minimum of two Q sorts loading significantly on the factor and eigenvalues (the sum of squared factor loadings for each factor) above 1.0 (Cattell's scree test). Within the context of this study, the level of significance was initially calculated, as $2.58 \times (1/\sqrt{42}) = 0.398 = 0.40$ and I used automatic flagging to identify correlated Q sorts. Q sorts loading significantly on the same factor were those sharing a similar sorting pattern, and therefore shared viewpoints on student voice. The percentage of total variance accounted for by each factor is equal to the eigenvalue divided by the number of variates in the matrix (Brown 1980). Those with less than this amount were regarded as insignificant to the research question (ibid). Factors with eigenvalues of 1.00 or more were extracted.

PQMethod returns the study results as an output LIS file, which I extracted in different factor configurations and used to determine the final factor solution. Possible solutions were two, three or seven factors. None of the three solutions had a low correlation, indicating that differentiation could be problematic – i.e. similarity between factors could pose problems. Initially I favoured the seven-factor solution, considering Watts and Stenner's (2012) suggestion that intricacies of lower loading factors might provide theoretical discovery. I had the opportunity to discuss this further with a Q expert who noted that although software for Q methodology typically extracted seven to eight factors, to ensure enough variance in the factor, as dilution occurred with each extraction, only three to four factors had mathematical value. The similarity in the correlation matrix and the lack of distinguishing statements made the seven-factor solution a difficult interpretation task: not to be discounted, but further exploration was advised.

Mathematically, the two-factor and three-factor solutions had commonality and conformed to Brown's (1993) advice that a factor should have at least five participants defining it. This will generate factor reliability of 0.95. Taking time at this point to re-

analyse the LIS data, I could see good distinction in the three-factor solution. Twenty-seven out of 45 Q sorts (60%) loaded onto factors. Twelve sorts were confounded, correlating significantly with more than one factor (8, 10, 13, 17, 22, 24, 27, 33, 36, 38, 43, 45); and six sorts were insignificant, not correlating with any of the emerging factors (1, 7, 16, 25, 29, 42). Confounded and insignificant sorts were discarded.

My three-factor solution explains the relationship between the Q sorts and shared meaning present in the data, cognisant with the gestalt tradition of holism, which underpins the nature of the Q procedure (Brown, 1980; Stainton Rodgers, 2011; Watts and Stenner, 2012). A gestalt procedure (ibid) cannot break up its subject matter into themes, rather, it can show how combinations or configurations of themes are interconnected, related or preferred by a group of participants (Watts and Stenner, 2005). Three factors cumulatively explain 49% of total variance, incorporating the majority of participants 60%=27/45. In Table 3.1, 'X' denotes the Q sorts loading on each factor and shading indicates the students that hold the three viewpoints. The factor Q sorts were made up of 20 females and 7 males. The spread of demographics was similar across factors, with none of the three international students appearing in these factors (2 confounded and 1 not significant). Students loading on factors were all of the home student type, and so I removed this code before factor interpretation to reduce the length of the final code (see Appendix 5).

The process renders the operant nature of the method, with the resulting array representing the participants' subjective stance in relation to the items sorted as three shared viewpoints on student voice (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The three-factor LIS file detailed specific statement ratings from highest (+4) to lowest (-4) by their associated Z scores: "a statement's factor score is the normalised weighted average statement score (Z score) of respondents that define that factor" (Van Exel and de Graaf, 2005:9). A positive Z score indicated agreement, and vice versa. I used the Z scores to produce a single array for each factor (Watts and Stenner, 2012) representing each of the three viewpoints (see Appendix 6) and in preparation for interpretation.

Q Sort	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1 10MH1	-0.2031	0.3516	0.0770
2 10FH1	-0.0999	-0.1395	0.5337X
3 10FH3	0.2324	0.5636X	0.0768
4 10FH1	0.6792X	0.2449	0.1750
5 10FH3	0.6061X	0.2265	-0.0132
6 10FH4	0.3442	0.1206	**0.5684X**
7 10FH3	-0.3725	-0.0468	-0.2357
8 11FH1M	0.5657	0.4766	0.2118
9 10FH1M	0.3527	0.5048X	0.3358
10 10FH4	0.6595	0.4209	-0.0030
11 11FH1	0.5858X	0.3845	-0.1319
12 10MH1M	0.4945X	-0.0082	0.0123
13 11MH3	0.6235	0.4293	0.1238
14 20FH1	0.3228	0.5369X	0.0831
15 21MH1	0.7375X	0.1466	0.1134
16 21MI7M	0.1337	0.1099	0.3024
17 21MH6	0.5218	0.4647	0.3462
18 21FH1	0.0149	0.2110	0.5553X
19 22FH1	0.3930	0.5299X	0.1542
20 21FH1M	0.2274	0.6014X	0.3630
21 21FH1	0.0662	0.6056X	0.3022
22 20FH4M	0.3839	0.5128	0.4311
23 21FH1	0.6601X	0.3320	0.1369
24 21FH1	0.5369	0.6026	0.0592
25 21FH4	0.3322	0.3565	0.3937
26 20MH1MP	0.5425X	0.3713	0.2040
27 21FH4	0.6307	0.4074	0.2809
28 20MH1	0.2067	0.4392X	0.3548

29 20ME2M	0.0033	0.0945	0.3430	
30 32MH1	**0.7889X**	0.2402	0.2354	
31 30FH1	0.7300X	-0.0284	0.2912	
32 33FH5M	0.7328X	0.3803	-0.0098	
33 30FH1MP	0.7071	0.4217	0.2445	
34 35MH3M	0.0549	0.3186	0.5324X	
35 30FH5	0.7038X	0.1235	0.2238	
36 30FH1	0.6379	0.4332	0.3276	
37 30FH1	0.3645	0.2691	0.4957X	
38 30FH1P	0.6764	0.4402	0.3475	
39 40MH1M	0.3609	0.6782X	0.2141	
40 44FH1	0.4027X	0.3161	0.0807	
41 45FH1	0.3331	0.6093X	0.0452	
42 50FH1	0.1202	0.0368	0.3830	
43 56MH4	0.5893	0.5719	0.1976	
44 51FH1M	0.2220	**0.7155X**	0.3309	
45 55FE2	0.5262	0.7532	-0.0473	
Eigenvalues	**10.08**	**7.14**	**3.36**	
% explained Variance	**24**	**17**	**8**	**49**

Table 3.1: Factor matrix: x represents a definable sort.

Stage 4: Factor interpretation

Factor interpretation involves explicating the viewpoint based upon the information contained within the LIS file. I used the LIS data to produce a crib sheet for each factor (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The crib sheet (see Appendix 7) contained: highest and lowest scoring items from the factor arrays; items ranked higher and lower than other factors; and distinguishing statements representing students loading significantly on each factor, this is the necessary detail to fully interrogate the data in the interpretation process (Watts and Stenner, 2012). I enhanced my crib sheet with the addition of demographic information and qualitative comments collected during the sorting

process: focus groups for Q set design; qualitative comments captured for extant statements during the Q sorting; and post-sorting Q focus groups, which I aligned to the statements denoting each of the three extracted factors. It is at this point that I was able to look for distinction between the three factors as different viewpoints.

Watts and Stenner (2012) suggest that the naming of factors gives them an identity and aids communicability - noting that these names emerge from, and are explicated through Q interpretation. Factor one as the main viewpoint was recognisable as consistent with the extant student voice literature and I deductively named this **'being'** student voice, considering at this time that students were embodying the student voice rhetoric. This along with the other factors required further abductive treatment to determine the nuances of viewpoints. I used my crib sheet to represent the 3 viewpoints as a Venn diagram, adding Q sort statements and student narratives to the three factors. I then used my social constructionist framework of authors from the second part of my literature review to abductively explain the emergent factors (Watts and Stenner, 2012), puzzling with "anomalies, inconsistencies and incongruities" (Stainton Rogers, 2011:48), "a logic designed for discovery and theory generation, not testing and theory verification" (Watts and Stenner, 2012:38). Interpretation followed as a hermeneutic process as I continued to explore the concepts within my framework iterative to revealing the subject positions represented in the viewpoints. **'Doing'** and **'seeing'** student voice emerged as I named factors 2 and 3 inductively. In the next chapter I provide a full account of each interpreted factor followed by a summarising account and diagrammatic representation to address question 2.

In a second stage of interpretation, and to address question 3, I focused on the similarities and differences between the factors to represent the viewpoints spatially (see chapter 4 for an explanation of spatial representation). I adopt C. Wright Mills's (1959:6) view of the sociological imagination as "the awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society" to interpret these factors and illuminate power relations that manifest themselves in university space to open up opportunities for students to reposition themselves in these student voice social structures. This view allows insight to be gained into how students experience and

make sense of the social structures in which they operate and helps to explain tacit mutual knowledge through scrutinising the meaning and motives behind their actions (Stainton Rogers, 2011) through their narratives.

The chapter has detailed the methodological approach for my Q study within a social constructionist interpretive framework. Q factor analysis identified the key viewpoints extant among the participants, and interpretation allowed me to understand these three viewpoints holistically and to a high level of qualitative detail (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The task of understanding and explicating the discourses at work in the data (Watts and Stenner, 2012) established it as a constructionist approach, as it did not aim to establish facts or to measure (Stainton Rodgers, 2011; Watts and Stenner, 2005), but to make subjectivity operant, assisting the process of bringing my conceptualization into being: “a transaction that is more akin to creativity than to measurement” (Brown, 1980:3).

Graduate interns have been co-constructors in my student voice research and practice. Focus group data was used to inform the Q design and so, in the first stage of the Q, focus groups were administered to a group of student representatives. This data informed the development of the Q set along with reviewed literature and insights from my professional practice. In the second stage of the Q, five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students Q sorted the Q set of propositions into a subjectively meaningful pattern providing their own unique perspective of their lived experience of student voice practiced space. Stage 3, Q analysis revealed three factors representing shared student viewpoints on student voice. In the next chapter, I shall interpret these student viewpoints as three distinct subject positions and in a further novel stage of interpretation (re)present these three viewpoints spatially allowing my social imagination to produce a new gaze on student voice practiced space.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I address each of the three research questions and illuminate students' lived experience of student voice practiced space:

Research question 1: How do student representatives construct student voice?

To inform my Q methodology analytical framework, I captured student representatives' expert narratives and used these in the construction of my Q set of statements on student voice, informed also by the reviewed student voice literature and my practice insights detailed in chapters 1 & 2.

Research question 2: How are students positioned within student voice practiced space?

The Q set, was Q sorted by five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students. I extracted three Q factors and using a social constructionist interpretive framework, I position students within university practiced space.

Research question 3: How do power relations manifest themselves within student voice practiced space?

I use my conceptual lens of sociological theories reviewed in chapter 2, to explicate spatially how power relationships influence the capacity for epistemic becoming through student voice practice.

Research question 1: How do student representatives construct student voice?

I present an interpretation of narratives captured in the stage one Q focus groups to reveal student representatives' constructions of student voice. This data informed a third of the Q sort statements as student representatives are considered to be informed participants on the subject of student voice. Students are coded A 1-6 and B 1-6, as there were two focus groups formed of a total of twelve student representatives.

The notion of student voice

These student representatives confirm the rhetoric of one voice fits all. (Cook-Sather, 2006). Their responses highlight the fact that they are narrating a homogenised and undifferentiated notion of student voice (Fielding, 2004), and as such, they take hegemonic discourses for granted as "stable monolithic forces" (Chase, 2011:422). This monolithic perspective overlooks the differentiated needs and perspectives of the diverse student body (Cook-Sather, 2006).

I'm interested in your understanding of student voice (Me).

Just like what we think, what we say (Student A4).

What the students have got to say (Student A3).

I think the idea that it's called a student voice, and that it's like a universal term, that it's like one voice put into the university representing the rest of the students. So, the idea that like one student can voice the opinion of many students (Student A5).

Students narrate their lack of a clear understanding of the notion of student voice. In the academic literature, this is documented as open to interpretation, where Freeman (2014) makes the point that it means different things to different people, which exacerbates translation into practice and as Seale (2010) suggests, creates a barrier. This is problematic, since if the concept of student voice is unclear, practice is compromised.

It's a term that's appeared throughout my years here, and it's not necessarily been explained. Perhaps a term that's obviously come up and like a lot of you know … them inside out it's assumed that everyone else will automatically…well the student voice, is your term, your name for the project or the association or whatever (Student B2).

As highlighted in the literature, student voice may be attributed to a variety of formal and informal contexts – structured and unstructured (Hill, 2012) – making it difficult to define, locate, access or acknowledge. Furthermore, in practice, for example in meetings, acronyms and terminology are used (and misused), presuming general understanding, which is exclusionary and presents a barrier to students' contributions, leading them to silence or withdrawal. Non-participation in processes and practices was revealed through student representatives' narratives.

Erm, its good in the way that erm the views are put forward, erm negative and positive points erm about teaching practices, and about general university life as well (Student A5).

*Yeah you know, like you know you can voice your opinions like you know when you can do it, the time you can do it cause it's sort of out there, so everyone knows about it. It's accessible to everyone, well who's a student (laughter) but yeah. (*Student A3*)*

Is it accessible to everyone? (Me).

I think so. Erm I dunno how to explain it (Student A3).

Well like, (sorry), everyone gets the opportunity to volunteer to be a rep so it's not limited in that, and obviously everything that's done gets put on [VLE] which the reps can then disseminate to all the rest of the class, so everyone is involved in it (Student A1).

Yep (Student A3).

Do you think everyone gets involved (Me)?

No (All students).

Not really (Student A2).

It's quite difficult from experience like trying to get our group in lectures to try and (agreement from others) you know, to get them to talk about things, and it tends to be the same people bringing up points, whether they're good or bad (Student A5).

Like they just say, they just say the basic stuff like, don't they? They don't really, they just bring up all the obvious and everyone just agrees (Student A4).

Student representative were passionate about others' reluctance to participate and the trivial comments made. Issues of non-participation in processes are narrated as dysfunctional. Those who don't take it seriously appear to be prevalent amongst students. Further narratives revealed barriers preventing students from voicing their opinion.

I don't think it's taken very seriously (agreement from others) in our group at all. You just, I mean you see empty sheets on desks where people haven't bothered, and straight away you haven't really got a valid result, as people haven't done it and … people have written like one word on them. I don't think they are done very seriously. There is [sic] people in our group that want changes and they moan about stuff but… (Student A5).

They don't write it (Student A3).

They literally can't be bothered to fill it in the form (Student A5).

Later on…

I think, I mean it works well as long as people aren't abusing it. But the fact that sometimes people don't even bother handing them in… (Student A5).

And sometimes they're cheeky answers (Student A4).

Yeah and stupid answers (Student A5).

Like […] tells us the stupid answers sometimes, and some of them are stupid (Student A2).

If you're not gonna take it seriously just don't do it (Student A3).

The constructed nature of student voice is narrated by students as *they know where it's come from:*

Yeah even though they say like they're confidential, they still like, th*ey know where it's come from, you know what I mean? Say, like if the tutor comes to pick them up 'cause they read it as they go around, and people don't say what they want to say as obviously you can see it as you're going around. Cause you know even though it says it is confidential, tutors can see it as they go around and people might not want to know what they're saying* (Student A4).

They know where it's come from tells us that lack of confidentiality prevents students from taking it seriously and the literature tells us staff have reason to fear their voice (Arthur, 2009). Stakes are high and students' narratives suggest that staff need to know what students are saying. The narrative suggests that important narratives are supressed.

Nip it in the bud

At this university, mid-module feedback is utilised as a formative module check between the module team and students at the mid-point of module delivery. All students are offered the opportunity to provide feedback to the module team, which is followed up with a response at the next available opportunity. Students question the value of mid-module feedback, suggesting that it should take place earlier, after three to four weeks of teaching. This could be problematic, depending on the nature of the

learning in a module, and indicates that students need to understand the process of learning as well as the subject they are being taught. As mentioned in the literature, there is much discussion on students' ability to judge teaching (Arthur, 2009; Arthur, 2010; Williams, 2013). This needs consideration in order to move towards co-construction, as the learning process is in danger of being interrupted by making unnecessary changes, as detailed in *banging your head against the wall*. The signs are that students are becoming demanding in their needs and behaviour.

I think that there are some people that would think it's not gonna get changed this year so there's no point in getting it changed at all, and I think that if it was brought forward and after 3/4 weeks you'd get an interest on what can be changed on the course…I do think that if you can't get a chance to say it early enough and it's not gonna impact on you then why would you say it? I think you need to see the impacts (Student B1).

Well the idea is you assume that the student voice is to Nip it in the bud before it comes out at the end (Student B2).

Fishing for comments

Students focus on negative points. In a consumer culture, feedback systems perform the work of *fishing for comments* for quality control and student representatives are enacting this role. With my restaurant background, mentioned in the opening chapter, I am aware that feedback is captured through customer mechanisms such as Trip Advisor and through survey completion often with monetary incentives administered via customer receipts and company websites. The purpose is to monitor quality issues, and this fuels consumer mentality. There is a parallel in expectations for competing student voice feedback and this may be transferred in students' habitus. Students are becoming increasingly demanding fueled by the rhetoric relayed to students about their experience, this reinforces their consumerist rights and their need to secure value for their payment of fees. Narratives confirm that students are resisting the feedback gathering techniques of representatives by opting for informal channels and this leaves the bigger issues constrained within formal mechanisms.

You find out more through word of mouth than you do like sort of fishing for comments off people (Student A5).

Yeah, what I usually do, I send them an email from erm the common module, which everyone has it, so they all got my email etc. and everything and erm they do talk to

me after lectures. They're always the bad points not got something good to say, you know they only wanting to accuse or something or another, but they're the minor issues not the bigger issues (Student A2).

Banging your head against a wall

Students illuminate the point that the process needs to filter out what actually is relevant. Reacting to students' feedback has been coupled with "You Said, We Did" campaigns that serve to meet students' best interests, communicating examples of action taken as a response to student feedback. But is action really required? In a treatment that Breslin suggested in 2011, student voice is about the spirit or ethos of the university as a community and effective education communities should consider the voice of all stakeholders in an ongoing respectful conversation, providing opportunity to understand the learning process instead of reacting to demands.

I think like (student B3) said it's a good way to start the process of filtering out what actually is relevant. Like it sounds daft but sometimes people write things down that aren't relevant, they're just telling you something for the sake of it (Student B2).

In the first semester we were asked if it was ok to have a lecture 'till after 7 and you said yes so you can't come back the second semester and say the lecture is on too late cause you were asked the question (Student B3).

And also, if people say they don't want lectures all day from 9-5, when the year before they were all complaining about having to come in every day (Student B1).

But then they complain when you get them all day (Student B1).

Yeah, like obviously I've been involved for two years so I can say, well you said something else last year so you wanna have a block of lectures we have it, and now we have it you don't wanna be in all day, so make up your mind (Student B3).

Even an immediate thing is people saying "I don't like this room, I can't see the lecturer" so I went and talked to [redacted] *about it and* [redacted] *was like I understand it, it's too crowded so* [redacted] *went and found a different lecture room, went back the next week we said we've got another lecture room…they were like no we don't wanna go over there we'll just say here so I was like, I've taken your feedback, we've done what you wanted to do and now we've got a room for you and don't want it!* (Student B1).

So it's understanding then (Me)?

Yeah, the issue, banging your head against a wall (Student B2)!

The issue is that students are telling a tale of frustration with their peers in their representation story. They *are banging [their] head[s] against the wall* through students constantly changing needs. This was highlighted in the literature around dealing with NSS dissatisfiers, in putting in solutions as Hounsell suggested in 2008, regarding NSS scores, as an indicator of weak provision is problematic. NSS reporting has been criticised as far removed from the departmental collection of feedback and its generalised nature makes it difficult to pinpoint dissatisfaction "a picture of great variability – variability within and across universities, within and across disciplines and within and across course teams" (Hounsell, 2008:2). Pressure of accountability systems has the potential to favour short-term solutions with the foci on improving low scores, which may lead to surface compliance (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006), and a tendency to close out points of dissatisfaction in favour of the latest problem (Williams, 2009), quick solutions on "how to do it" rather than "why we might want to do it" (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006:21).

Black hole

In providing feedback, student representatives saw value in determining direct channels of communication, as these presented better opportunities for receiving feedback on actions. It is apparent that the more an issue gets diluted through channels, the more opportunity it has to get lost in the fabric of the university and for rot to set in. Dilution is caused by the passing of messages through system channels, which reduces the qualities of speech, and translation to practice dilutes interpretation and the quality of action by increasing the time taken for resolution. That is, items need to be approved to be recognised/policy, and then disseminated through committees – then actioned-dilution in interpretation leads to second-hand communication lost in translation and second-hand voice in danger of disappearing in the *black hole*.

By telling them what's happening, keeping them involved, making sure you're listening to the feedback and then feeding back to them, rather than just doing it, make sure that they know that you've responded to their feedback and I think it's just little things like that that some lecturers do really well but some don't do at all and I think make them feel like they're having an impact and that what they're doing is worthwhile rather than just saying it and it going into a black hole. I think that's the way to, because

they'll speak to the next years and by saying "I've done this and it's a really good experience" and then more people will want to get involved (Student B1).

In giving feedback through institutional mechanisms, it was apparent that the biggest frustration for student representatives was the ability for action to be taken on issues and it is apparent that they would welcome a conversation and that action is not the answer they are always seeking.

Some things just never seem to be getting resolved, no matter how many times you voice them…but there isn't necessarily the feedback back from whoever it is that's meant to be taking that action point, to let everyone know actually we can't do anything about it, you know, we've tried our best. It's, you know, people keep on saying it because they obviously aren't aware. So, I think maybe it's a slight communication issue back from the action points (Student A1).

And there's been no progress and no communication of any progress at all, so people just think they've been ignored, I suppose. And then that might stop them from coming to the meetings in the future and bringing stuff up (Student A5).

There is evidence that we are listening, and dealing with issues, but in many instances, students are not made aware of the result. Issues feeding forward need a quick way of cascading information, even if change is not possible. Communication and the need to know it is being addressed, is deemed as important.

It's building communication

In order to move to a developmental model of student voice, a culture of trust must manifest itself. It is all well and good empowering students to voice their opinions, but the follow-through will not happen if noise prevents an ongoing conversation necessary to close the feedback loop. The conversation works at many levels. At module level, an early module feedback opportunity enables module teams to have a reciprocal learning conversation with students and to address concerns early enough to make a difference for the students' learning experience. A forum provided for inclusive student voice needs to be authentic and not subject to interpretation (feedback passed through channels). Opportunity needs to be built into the learning process to channel comments directly to those who can discuss issues, rather than reacting to comments with action, and/or to influence decisions on action in a strategic

and non-reactionary way. Otherwise, immediacy is being perpetuated with actions for actions' sake, as noted in *banging your head against a wall*.

> *Yeah, I think that's what it is, there needs to be the trust, there needs to be action on what is said, so there needs to be trust on what is said, lecturing representatives or the schools within the university once that trust is gained. I mean it happens in the working environment doesn't it, between a manager and an employee? Once that employee trusts that actually what they've said is being considered, they're more likely to go forward and you know* (Student B2).
>
> *It's building communication, because if you feel like you say it, they change it, but if you have to keep on saying it again and again and you don't care then we'll just stop saying* (Student B3).
>
> *But it's also the acknowledgement as to why it's not happened, rather than just ignoring it. If you come back with a justification, obviously you start to trust the lecturers in that they are filtering and understanding, and they are trying to change things. But obviously if they can't change something there must be a good reason why they can't change it, and that's sort of a relationship building thing* (Student B2).

Developing trust between teachers and students and amongst students themselves is crucial to facilitating engagement in the student voice, as was noted in Carey's (2011) research. SRs commented that their peers would only approach if they knew and trusted you. The SR, then, has to articulate what has been said in such a way that anonymity is preserved, and it does not appear to be their own problem.

A different kettle of fish

The nature of 'other' voices is problematised through focus group data in *a different kettle of fish*. There was discussion about the student voice and differentiation in need relating to mature versus normal (ised) (my emphasis) 18-21 students and increased engagement for students residing on the campus. Students saw this split as academic/student and defined 'student' with negative attributes as opposed to the positive characteristics of the academic student. Access and connection to/with "other" students referred to as the *non-normal student* posed a problem for representation.

> *I'm classed as a mature student … it's a whole different experience cause you're older but then you're still tryna [sic] understand your own independence as a Uni student, understand your purpose here is to study but also going out a socialising with different people from different areas from different backgrounds and upbringings and so I think it's, like your saying, it's a two-way street cause everyone's got something to give, some life experience. It's how you challenge it: if you wanna participate in something*

you participate in it, and if you don't and you wanna be academic and more focused then you'll do it. So…calling us students a partner, I do agree, because I don't wanna be classed as a typical student, a partner, being called a partner, makes you feel like you got a purpose, so me coming to university has a purpose (Student B4).

I think perhaps what I was saying is it's not, it doesn't appear to always be open to the people who are the non-normal student. They're not necessarily as inclusive [as] perhaps people would like to think it is (Student B2).

On the other hand, coming from a side trying to represent students, I find it really hard to engage with those students who are part-time, who just come in for their lectures then go home (Student B1).

Yeah, they're a different kettle of fish (Student B2).

They're hard to engage with because with a lot of 18-21-year-old students here we can just go to halls and talk to them, go to the bars and talk to them, or find them on nights out and they're really easy to engage with, they're usually in the Students' Union. Whereas the part-time students who are the mature students who just come in for the course and then go again, it's really hard to engage with them cause obviously we haven't got access to emails, so we can't just email them all. We've got to have that connection to start off with to communicate and represent. We find it really hard to represent students who are in that category (Student B1).

Drilling down to represent international students provides a further perspective:

I think it's just for those people that don't want to talk to lecturers or people who work within the university, so they feel closer talking to someone within their class so it's [an] easier way (Student B6).

W*e do have loads of international students in our class, so they do respond, because they're less talkative and they don't have that much interaction with the tutor straight away, so they find this practice is really good in-between the class, because they are shy, going to their tutor* (Student A4).

Inclusivity is problematic within a system of student representation. Students are provided with opportunities and mechanisms for feedback and the purpose of SRs is to represent the views and to be the voice of their peers. This relies on the concept of representation, and it was clear from the focus groups that a number of issues arose from the processes. They are suggesting here that student voice is for the "normal" student and that the non-normal and "academic" student are either unsure of the rules of the game or are playing different games (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Inclusivity and accessibility are issues to be considered for the non-normal student, metaphorically referred to as *a different kettle of fish*, reflecting that their different needs are unconventional within the university systems and processes, which appear to favour engagement and communication with the typical full-time undergraduate which this data confirms that student representatives conform to.

> *We've got to have that connection to start off with to communicate and represent. We find it really hard to represent students who are in that category* (Student B1).

It becomes apparent that developing relationships amongst the student cohort is a key factor in SV engagement. This is in terms of relationships between student and student and between students and teaching staff. This can assist in nurturing a sense of belongingness between students, to the programme of study and to the wider institutional environment.

Relationships can be compromised when, for example, students are on shorter courses, such as post-graduate degrees. Relationships can become deeply embedded when students are together for a longer duration of time. The length of the course is therefore important in facilitating relationships and communication in the student voice. Furthermore, as courses progress towards completion, a sense of apathy towards the SV can prevail, leading to a lack of engagement.

Experience to learn

The skills development student voice provides for some is highlighted by students who have managed to broaden their horizons (Lock and Strong, 2010) through their representation experience. Their coming to know dialogically is signaled as needing to experience in order to learn.

> *Without realising it, you probably do realise that it has, you do understand the processes and sitting in a meeting and getting your point across, without perhaps talking over other people or you know, knowing when to stop or start, and really lots of little things you don't learn, you just need to experience them before you learn them* (Student B2).
>
> *I think as well, being diplomatic in meetings, being prepared, I'd never known before I*

started being a course rep that you have to start reading minutes and taking notes and it's all obvious now but thinking about it, I didn't know how to do it. [I] think it's being able to speak in a meeting and yeah, time management, organisation… and being able to get your point across without lots of mumbling (Student B1).

SRs identified that the process is equipping them with a skill set which differentiates them from their peers, particularly the acquisition of skills in navigating the political and emotional landscape within the context of the university. The ability to select and present key issues at meetings, or to determine channels for resolution and follow through to a result, were cited. Consultation assumes a degree of social and linguistic confidence that not all students have or feel they have (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006).

Summary

Student representatives confirm the monolithic perspective of student voice (Cook-Sather, 2006). This is problematic if the types of students recruited to the role are unrepresentative of the student population. Such students will lack a perception that student voice in this guise is unrepresentative of the diversity of the student population, as Cook-Sather (2006) highlighted in the literature. Student voice may be attributed to a variety of formal and informal contexts, structured and unstructured (Hill, 2012), making it difficult to define, locate, access or acknowledge and in lost in translation, narratives confirm that these students lack clarity in the notion of student voice and this presents a barrier to its function if these students are charged with its implementation. Student representatives become frustrated by the lack of engagement by their peers and enact their role by *fishing for comments*. These students are the products of socially constructed student voice. Rhetoric tells them that their student experience is paramount and "You Said, We Did" messages reinforce their consumerist rights.

Student feedback is connected to improvements, and this needs the ability to connect it with the learning process in order to be able to make insightful changes. In nip it in the bud, students suggest that by week four they have enough information to judge their modules, but they may be jumping ahead of the learning process with this trait of immediacy. If students are asked to give feedback on their learning, a meaningful

dialogue is needed that mediates the feedback and considers (rather than reacts to) comments through a lens that encompasses lecturers' experience, and is able to translate the comments as part of a process of learning, which may not be apparent to learners until they have completed a scheme of module work. Consulting with students within a learning cycle needs the ability to judge if changes are necessary at a point when students may not be aware of the teaching strategy and the point at which the learning has taken place, so that they are consciously competent (Howell,1982) that their voice is appropriate to add value to the learning environment. Narratives cast doubt on the appropriateness of actions taken in response to feedback, and SRs are left *banging their heads against a wall* as mechanisms supress the bigger issues.

Student voice as a mechanism for being heard is limited by systematic implementation. Students are aware that there are mechanisms for voicing their concerns/suggestions/wishes. Representatives continue to bring up issues. Some understand that issues are being addressed, and they understand that the process is bureaucratic. Students prefer first-hand communication as their voice can be subject to second- hand interpretation and lost in translation, disappearing into a *black hole*. *Building communication* requires trust and building relationships with staff and students.

Their peers opt for non-participation because they know where it's come from, which suggests that staff need to know what students are saying. Students *don't take it seriously*, suppress their true voice for *stupid answers*, and choose informal channels, leaving bigger issues un-addressed. Restricting student voice through mechanisms limits the openness of opportunities for students to voice their opinions. Enabling voice isn't about creating structures (Breslin, 2011), nor is it a "technology or technique" (Fielding, 2015a:5). Applying a reductionist approach constrains voice to fit organisational structures (Housee, 2018; Barker and Jane, 2016; Gill, 2008). As such, the structure constrains the ability to act as a free agent (Barker and Jane, 2016). "The power of their 'voice' is mediated and diluted as it is channeled into 'safe' spaces and managed by more powerful 'voices'" (Hadfield and Haw, 2001: 497). In *a different*

kettle of fish, it can be understood that the voice of others is excluded as systems do not accommodate the diverse student body. There is a need to understand the *non-normal student* highlighted in a *different kettle of fish*. These students are narrating that the student voice practiced space represents a daunting experience for them and they do not feel welcome there.

The opportunity to *experience to learn* has allowed student representatives' skills development to broaden their horizons (Lock and Strong, 2010); but they are privileged, as Habermas (1992) posits that a tendency to pick the right students for representative positions exacerbates homogeneity (Thomson, 2011). Different ways of being are opened up by amplifying those horizons (Lock and Strong, 2010) to become places of authentic learning (Kreber, 2013) through engaging the diversity of the student body dialogically in social practice (Lock and Strong, 2010) as zones of engagement (Barnett, 2018).

Research question 2: How are students positioned within student voice practiced space?

It is pertinent to reiterate at this stage that student representatives' narratives presented above as their constructions of student voice informed a third of the 42 student voice statements selected for the Q sort. Forty-five students with and without SR experience Q sorted these statements into a subjectively meaningful pattern (array) representing their individual viewpoint. These were then Q analysed using PQMethod software and three shared viewpoints were extracted. This provided a LIS file, which gave me information to facilitate my interpretation. I followed Watts and Stenner's (2012) guidance in producing a crib sheet with the information I needed from the LIS file to help me to interpret the factors. I also added the qualitative comments from the Q to provide meaning to the statements (see Appendix 7). Using a social constructionist interpretive framework, the puzzling stage is a hermeneutic iterative process of discovery, and I puzzled abductively with my sociological lens to explicate what students were saying in their talk and named the factors **'being', 'doing'** and **'seeing'** student voice.

In line with the conventions of Q methodology, I present a "full and holistic representation" (Watts and Stenner, 2012:182) of the three factors (full version) demonstrating rigour by accounting for the entire item configuration captured in each factor array and enrichened by narratives from students (ibid). Full version interpretations are presented with their associated statements (in bold) and student narrative (in italics). In reading the descriptions, it is useful to understand that the ranking of the statements is presented in the format (16:-4*). The (16) is the statement number and the (-4) is the statement placement or ranking. Where a * is indicated, this represents a significant score (mathematically). Factors have been shaded to differentiate them, and students exemplifying each factor appear in bold (this is determined by the highest factor score). Coding appears in table order: for example, 21F1 is code for second year, one year of student representative experience, female, and white British (refer to Figure 3.12). For clarity to the reader I have added the names **'being', 'doing'** and **'seeing'** to the factors, noting that these student voice positions emerge from, and are explicated through Q interpretation.

Factor 1: 'being' student voice	**Factor 2: 'doing' student voice**	**Factor 3: 'seeing' student voice**
10F1M 0.6792	10F3 0.5636	10F1 0.5337
10F3 0.6061	10F1M 0.5048	**10F4** **0.5684**
11F1 0.5858	20F1 0.5369	21F1 0.5553
10M1M 0.4945	22F1 0.5299	3M3M 0.5324
21M1 0.7375	21F1M 0.6014	30F1 0.4957
21F1 0.6601	21F1M 0.6056	
20M1MP 0.5425	20M1M 0.4392	
32M1 **0.7889**	40M1M 0.6782	
30F1 0.7300	45F1 0.6093	
3F5M	**51F1M**	

	0.7328	**0.7155**	
	30F5 0.7038		
	44F1 0.4027		
Eigenvalues	**10.08**	**7.14**	**3.6**
% explained variance	**24**	**17**	**8**
Notes: 1. Highest (in bold and shaded) scored student = most representative of factor			

Table 4.1: Factors.

Factor 1: 'Being' student voice (full version)

It wouldn't be called student voice if it wasn't set up to give the student a voice at university 11F1.

Twelve Q sorts were loaded onto Factor 1, which explained 24% of the study variance and had an eigenvalue of 10.08. Demographics indicate:

- 8 females and 4 males: 4 year 1's, 3 year 2's, 4 year 3's and 1 year 4.
- 50% had had student representation experience, ranging from course rep: 1 year (n=3), 2 years (n=1) 3 years (n=1) and 4 years, including Students' Union representation (n=1).
- Ethnicity: White n=9, BAME n=3.
- Mode of study: full time n=8, mature n=3 and part-time n=1.

'Being' student voice is embracing student voice at face value. They defend student experience statements (highest of the three factors) in their rankings of associated statements **(41:+4* and 16:-4*)** and are the most enthusiastic and positive commenters on student voice processes and practices, connecting these to their student experience, suggesting they follow the rhetoric.

Out of the three viewpoints, these students had the most disagreement with the statement: **I am unhappy with my university experience (16:-4*).** *My university experience has been entirely positive, primarily through the engagement and rapport that can be established with academic staff* 32M1. Their association of student voice to student experience illustrates a disconnect to the notion of voice being about speaking or being heard, and their high agreement to **student voice is about improving the student experience (41:+4*)**. *Student experience is always talked about and emphasised. In feedback, the best is always tried to be aimed for as they want to help in any way, they can e.g. through feedback back to students* 30F1. *Student voice is really about students' experience (hence the title). It's the main way to help students throughout the university* 10F3.

These students are student voice advocates. They have strong disagreement with the idea that **student voice pretends to be about listening to students (5:-4*)**. *It wouldn't be called the student voice if it wasn't set up to give the student a voice at university* 11F1. Furthermore, this illustrates their intuitive belief in the rhetoric. *Student voice helps students talk to/get along with peers on the same course. This is one of the key aspects. Issues raised on student voice are rectified, which means the students are heard and actions can then be seen* 21F1. They agree that **the university is good at involving students in decisions about their learning (13:+3*) and** disagree that **student voice processes are inconsistent (10:-2*),** and that **there are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback (38:-3).**

Out of the three factors, they have the least agreement with the idea that **student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda (31:-1*),** and they share this disagreement with Factor 2 students, i.e. they disagree with the statement that **If student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same (39:-2).** These students have the most agreement with the statement that **student voice processes allow me to say what I want to say about my learning (36:+4)**. *Student voice allows me to inform the lecturers of not only my own learning*

but of my peers also. This means students will be able to get across how they learn best 21M1.

These students have stronger agreement than those of other factors that **student voice processes allow all students to participate (9:+3*) and** perceive that **all students are represented in student voice (14:+1*)**. *Student voice is about what the students want to happen at the university 11F1. All students are represented through student voice by peers within course disciplines. This means that the reps can ensure lecturers receive feedback from the students on their course* 21M1. Similar to Factor 2 students, they agreed that **student representatives represent my views well (35:+1).** Whilst 50% are student representatives, their prospective impact is low.

Whilst they perceive processes and practices to be inclusive and trustworthy, there is a disconnect and some interesting insight regarding confidence and associated agency. **I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters (26:-1).** The potential they see for their voice to have an impact is limited by their self-professed lack of confidence and low perception of influence. They ranked lowest (out of the three factors): **I feel confident in voicing my opinion in meetings (1:0*),** whereas the other two factors registered strong agreement **(+4)**. Similar to Factor 3, but different to confident Factor 2, these students registered a neutral score for: **I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating (40:0)**. *Very shy person, so I feel intimidated talking in front of my peers* 10M1M. They agree less than the other two factors, who ranked at **(+4)** the statement that **the feedback I give is honest (4:+2*)**.

Their responses to: **students moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback, they keep quiet (17:+3)**, were the most illuminating. *Students are quick to moan about lecturers but aren't willing to contribute to the student voice system* 44F1. *It's something I feel strongly about as a student rep. People refuse to engage, participate and turn up to lectures, will not talk to a rep about their issues, but continue to complain and be disruptive* 32M1. *I believe that everyone has a voice and should use viewpoints constructively. Students should speak up and*

express their concerns but are very quick to moan and complain but they never express what they feel or experience or feedback and it's very frustrating. Speak up or shut up I believe 33F5M! A confidence issue was revealed by another student within this factor contradicting the previous narratives: *I am usually one of those people as I am not confident in giving my feedback because I am not comfortable with confrontation* 20M1P. Furthermore, similar to Factor 3, but different from Factor 2, who dispensed with anonymity **(-3),** they registered neutral to: **I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous (27:0).**

Considering the community dimension of student voice, these students differ in their viewpoint to Factor 3 **(12:-4*),** believing that: **student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers (12:+2*).** Considering the potential for student voice to build social capital, these students took the middle ground and an individualistic position in relation to the other factors for the statement: **I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will (30:0*).** In relation to their perceptions of staff experience of student feedback, these students had the most disagreement (compared with the other two factors) with the statements that: **staff feel criticised by students during feedback opportunities (32:-1*)** and **lecturers are scared of what I have to say about their teaching (34:-3).**

On transformation and identity, these students are the most positive on the skills development potential of student voice, with the highest agreement (of the three factors) with the associated statements: **involvement in student voice has developed necessary life skills (42:+1); using my voice at university has helped me to use my voice in situations outside the university (20:+1*)** – *Communication in university has helped me with my confidence, talking to people in industry* 21F1; – and **skills developed through student voice processes and practices make me a better person (28:0).** However, these statements did not receive priority in their ranking.

Factor 2: 'Doing' student voice (full version)

I think most students don't care about the student voice and use if for what tangible aspects they can get out of it i.e. cookies. However, in a way it has to be like that. They don't realise getting involved is good for future prospects. They live for the 'here and now' and care only about themselves 21F1M.

Ten Q sorts were loaded onto Factor 2, which explained 17% of the study variance and had an eigenvalue of 7.14. Demographics indicate:

- 8 females and 2 males: 2 year 1's, 5 year 2's, 2 year 4's and 1 year 5.
- 50% had student representation experience ranging from: 1 year (n=3), 2 years (n=1) and students' union officer (n=1).
- Ethnicity: white n=9, BAME n=1.
- Mode of study: full time n=4, mature n=6.

In relation to agency and the possibility for SV to affect change, these students are the most confident of the three factors, strongly disagreeing with the statement: **I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating (40:-4*)**: *I disagree with this statement as I don't find speaking honestly to people in positions of authority intimidating 51F1M. I don't find speaking out intimidating and I am happy to use the processes that are in place to channel my feedback* 21F1M. *I definitely do not find speaking out on university experience intimidating. All people involved in the 'student voice' are approachable and treat individuals as an equal 10F1M. Plenty of opportunity given in a free and universal way* 20M1M.

Similar to Factor 3, these students have the strongest agreement with the statement: **I feel confident to voice my opinions in meetings (1:+4)**. *Having been heavily involved in the student engagement process, I feel confident to voice my opinions as I knew they would be listened to and I would get the relevant feedback. I also found this useful when representing students as I had to speak on behalf of others at senior university meetings* 45F1. *I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings as I am the*

voice of the student population who were brave enough to give me their feedback. If I undertake a role, I am passionate and serious about it 21F1M. *As a student rep it is my role to voice opinions, so in general meetings I am confident to voice my own opinions as I understand that this is the way to get problems resolved* 22F1. *I feel confident to air any opinions concerning university issues, as I feel that I could be listened to and any action that could take place would take place* 10F1M. They share agreement with all factors that **students' views are listened to in meetings (2:+2).** These students were the only factor to register a positive score for: **I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters (26:+1*).**

Similar to Factor 3 and different from Factor 1, these students' sense of self and associated agency is apparent from their ability to speak out. They are the only factor inhabiting practiced space, but indications from the significant **(+1*)** score for statement **26** and the use of *could* in response to statement **1** suggest that they perceive their influence lower than the potential it could hold.

Whilst the other factors registered neutral, these students were in strong disagreement with the statement: **I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous (27:-3*).** *I disagree because I don't care about others' opinions of me* 21F1M. *I am happy to give my feedback and have my name attached for the record* 51F1. *Don't feel the need for anonymity to give feedback or voice opinion. Student voice has plenty of options and routes to voice concerns/opinions and lecturers were in the majority encouraging and open to communication with students* 40M1M.

These students registered the strongest agreement with the statement: **the feedback I give is honest (4:+4)**. *No point in giving false feedback. Saying what you think people want to hear doesn't change anything - honest feedback good or bad helps to improve and shape product/service/course* 40M1M. *I agreed with this card as it's true I happily give my honest feedback, regardless of the impact* 51F1M. *My feedback is honest because I don't care about impressing people with what they want to hear. I like to pride myself with critically telling it like it is* 21F1M. *My personal feedback is honest. I look at both sides before I articulate and give an honest account of what I*

see, hear and understand 21F1M. *Always contribute to feedback as honestly as possible. It is important that the university is aware of students' opinions* 20F1. *There is no point in giving any feedback if it is not honest. The outcome would then be pointless* 10FH1M.

Out of the three factors, these students had the strongest disagreement with the statements: **student voice processes do not enable me to voice my true opinion (3:-3*)** – *Student voice provides people to become a student rep and this gives opportunity for staff/student liaison* 21F1M. – **I don't take student voice seriously because nothing ever changes (37:-2);** and **there are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback (38:-4)** – *Had no reason to mistrust any of the university systems for student feedback. Any occasion I had a query or voiced my opinion it was dealt with appropriately* 40M1M. *All systems are explained in detail and you as students are reassured to the validity and also that your feedback won't be used without consent (data protection)* 22F1. They shared disagreement (with Factor 1) that: **if student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same (39:-2).**

In relation to the statement: **student voice is tokenistic in the way it involves students (21:0),** which received neutral ranking across the three factors, the responses from this factor were most enlightening in their perception of the socially constructed nature of student voice. *I think most students don't care about the student voice and use if for what tangible aspects they can get out of it i.e. cookies. However, in a way it has to be like that. They don't realise getting involved is good for future prospects. They live for the 'here and now' and care only about themselves* 21F1M.

Differing from Factor 1's disagreement, and Factor 3's agreement, they had a neutral response to the statement*:* **student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda (31:0).** They are positive, but less than the other factors, that **student voice processes allow me to say what I want to say about my learning (36:+2).** *Opportunity given to say what I want without feeling pressured about what I am saying. In different forms as well* 20M1M.

Considering the potential for student voice to build social capital, these students have the strongest agreement that: **while they will not benefit as a result of their feedback, future student cohorts will (30:+3*).** In relation to the community dimension of student voice, they have the most agreement of the factors that **action results from students using their voice collectively (11:+2)**. *The more students who are agreeing with a problem, the more important the problem is. The university would see it as an issue affecting most and take action* 22F1.

In this factor, students agree that: **student voice processes allow all students to participate (9:+1*)** – *Plenty of opportunity given to students to express themselves. Does not target individuals. Many different ways, down to the student to take advantage* 20M1M – but are less committed on student representation matters: all students are represented in the student voice **(14:0*)**. Similar to Factor 1, where Factor 3 disagree, they have slight agreement that: **student representatives represent my views well (35:+1).**

There is considerable frustration with peers' lack of engagement in student voice processes (equal across the factors): **students who moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback, they keep quiet (17:+3).** *Because I give honest feedback it frustrates me when others don't. if people aren't prepared to speak up, they can't expect change* 51F1M. *Students frequently moaned about aspects of lectures, but only a small percentage would actually voice their opinions or question why lectures were in the format they moaned about. Plenty of opportunity to voice opinion but most refused to openly voice opinion* 40M1M.

In comparison with the other factors, they take the mid ground on attributing relationship-building to SV: **student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers (12:0*).** But these students are the most positive about **student voice bridges the gap between staff and students (24:+3).**

In relation to transformation, identity and agency, these students were in the middle ground for the associated statements: **involvement in student voice has developed**

necessary life skills (42:0); using my voice at university has helped me to use my voice in situations outside the university (20:-1) – *Communication in university has helped me with my confidence, talking to people in industry* 21F1 – **skills developed through student voice processes and practices make me a better person (28:-1);** and **the university is good at involving students in decisions about their learning (13:0).**

Students in all factors were confident of their skills in relation to the statement: **students don't have the skills to judge learning and teaching, with Factor 2 showing the most disagreement (19:-3), and** the other factors **(-2)**. *Students are made up of a diverse range of people and needs. They are key in judging the learning and teaching as they are the ones who are involved, the ones learning. I don't see what other skills you need when faced with first-hand experience 22F1. Student opinion identifies what benefits them and can often see problems others don't. Students are customers and still require the service to be of a high standard* 20M1M.

Factor 3: 'Seeing' student voice (full version)

I do feel that the student voice is just there for university to say they listen to students 10F1

Five Q sorts were loaded onto Factor 3, which explained 8% of the study variance and had an eigenvalue of 3.6. Demographics indicate:

- 4 females and 1 male: 2 year 1's, 1 year 2, 2 year 3's.
- 3 students had had no involvement in student representation whilst the other 2 ranged from 1 year (n=1) and students' union officer (n=1).
- Ethnicity: white n=3, BAME n=2.
- Mode of study: full time n=4, mature n=1.

This position is defined by a refusal to believe that: **all students are represented in the student voice (14:-4).** *I don't feel that all students are involved, and it is impossible to get all students involved* 10F1*.* This differs from the opinion of students

in the other factors (Factor 1, **+1** and Factor 2, **0**). Nor do they perceive that **student voice processes allow all students to participate (9:-1*)**.

In relation to community and collective aspects of student voice, these students are neutral in regard to the collective power of voice: **action results from students using their voice collectively (11:0).** This factor had the lowest scores and strongest disagreement with the statement that: **student voice has helped me to build relationships with my peers (12:-4*).** *Attempts to engage peers to give feedback have failed resulting in some lack of effort being why I have said the statement at card 15. The process has not been negative just has not changed anything between myself and my peers* 21F1.

Considering the potential for student voice to build social capital, these students had significant disagreement with the statement: **I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will (30:-2*).** *I disagree with this because any feedback current students give should be put into place. The current students need to see the changes made* 10F1. This contrasted with Factor 2, **(+3)** and Factor 1, **(0).**

In relation to agency and the ability for SV to affect change, these students had the strongest agreement with the statement: **I don't take student voice seriously because nothing ever changes (37:+1*)**. *I've been here over 2 years and my points/views haven't been introduced in my course. Also, in my second year I strongly helped a student campaigning for [SU position]… was elected yet nothing changed* 35M3M.

Similar to Factor 1, and in contrast to Factor 2 **(-4),** these students ranked neutral on the statement: **I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating (40:0);** and they had significant ambivalence in response to: **there are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback (38:-1*).**

They had the most agreement with the statement*:* **student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda** (**31:+1).** Furthermore, in response to: **if student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same** (**39:0***), scores were neutral, whilst the other two factors registered **(-2)** disagreement. They agreed (more than the other factors) that: **university reporting of student viewpoints is accurate (6:+1)**; but in comparison to the other factors mostly agreed that: **SV processes are inconsistent (10:+2)**. They ranked **student voice pretends to be about listening to students** higher than the other factors **(5:-1).** *I do feel that the student voice is just there for university to say they listen to students* 10F1. Furthermore, similar to Factor 1, they registered neutral to: **I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous (27:0).**

Similar to Factor 2, these students **confidently voice their opinions in meetings (1:+4) –** *I do feel that when it comes to voicing my opinions, I am confident, therefore I am willing to voice my opinion* 10F4 **– give honest feedback (4:+4) –** *I always take time to fill it in [module feedback] honestly to achieve results* 30F1*. I do feel I am honest therefore any feedback that I give will be 100% honest* 10F4 – and share agreement with all factors that: **students' views are listened to in meetings (2:+2).** These students disagreed (more than the other factors) that: **lecturers ask for feedback, but my comments are ignored (7:-3).** Similar to Factor 2, and different from Factor 1, their sense of self and associated agency is apparent from their ability to speak out, although they fail to practice in the "provided" space. However, these students are different from Factor 2 **(+1)** as they have not influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters **(26:-3).**

These students can be differentiated from the other factors by their disagreement with the statement that: **student representatives represent my views well (35,-1*).** There is considerable frustration with peers' lack of engagement in student voice processes (equal across the factors): **students moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback, they keep quiet (17:+3).** *I am aware many students have complaints they do not want to share. Often, they have been said and*

ignored in the past or feel nothing can be done. Lots of things are complained about on social networking or through talks but a lot of time it does not come up in feedback; particularly if it is about a specific lecturer as this is uncomfortable 21F1 *but* are considered in their response to: **I could make more use of student voice opportunities (15:+3*).** *As a student rep I could announce…about upcoming meetings or on Facebook ensure I have gathered everyone's opinions to feedback. Maybe speak to lecturer on behalf of a student in between meetings* 21F1.

Considering the partnership potential of SV, these students were the least positive responders to the statement: **student voice bridges the gap between staff and students (24:1).** And they ranked the following statements as neutral, registering more agreement than the other two factors: **the student voice system is set up for staff and not students (22:0*);** and: **staff ask for feedback because they are told to by the university (23:0).** This suggests that these students see student voice as contrived.

In relation to transformation and identity, these students are the least positive on the skills development potential of student voice, with the lowest responses to the associated statements: **skills developed through student voice processes and practices make me a better person (28:-2*);** and: **involvement in student voice has developed necessary life skills (42:-1).**

Factor summaries

Following the full factor versions, in line with the conventions of Q methodology, I present factor summaries to capture the essence of my interpreted viewpoints. Q methodology within a social constructionist framework has enabled students to enter into dialogue and has enabled me to interpret their three distinct positions as '**Being', 'Doing'** and **'Seeing'** student voice.

'Being' student voice

'Being' student voice students are the main factor, the protagonists in this scenario, and account for the majority voice in the university space. Student voice is objectified

by students in this factor referring to it as *title* and *set up for students,* which signifies a disconnect to its agentic potential, and that it is a construction for students to tell of their experience in a managed way, to improve the student experience. They take student voice at face value. They rank student experience statements in their highest statement placings (**41:+4*; 16:-4***); and the way that they talk about student voice is unrelated to the act of speaking or being heard. They have a gullible and adherent association to SV and are seen to follow the rules with intuitive acceptance; and while the other factors gain insight through being in the Q study, these appear to naively follow the rhetoric **(5:-4*)**.

Whilst they perceive processes and practices to be inclusive and trustworthy, there is disconnect regarding confidence and associated agency. The potential for their voice to have an impact is limited by their self-professed lack of confidence and low perception of influence. This came through in the responses and ranking of three different statements **(1:0*; 40:0; 17:+3)**: *I am not confident in giving my feedback because I am not comfortable with confrontation.* This could limit the impact of any student voice processes with which they interact by being passive, silencing communication and not representing others. As partners, these students are "safe" for the university with their low confrontational impact.

Considering their affinity to student voice, and that half of these students are representatives, their opinion of the effectiveness of the role of student representation meets low agreement (**14:+1*; 35:+1**). Although they suggest that student voice helps them to develop peer relationships (**12:+2*)**, they are individualistic in their negative response to their voice benefiting future generations of students (**30:0***).**'Being'** student voice (see Figure 4.1) is intuitive, "inside the pale", conforming to acceptable behaviour; "fitting within the templates of accepted good practice" (Fielding, 2001:106). These students shape themselves into self-scrutinising subjects to say the right thing, aspiring to fit the norm (Fejes, 2013). As such, they represent a voiceless space constructed by intuitive compliance to endorsed rhetoric (5:-4*). As the main factor if these are the students inhabiting the

majority of student voice space, their pedagogical contribution is questionable and personal growth potential minimal.

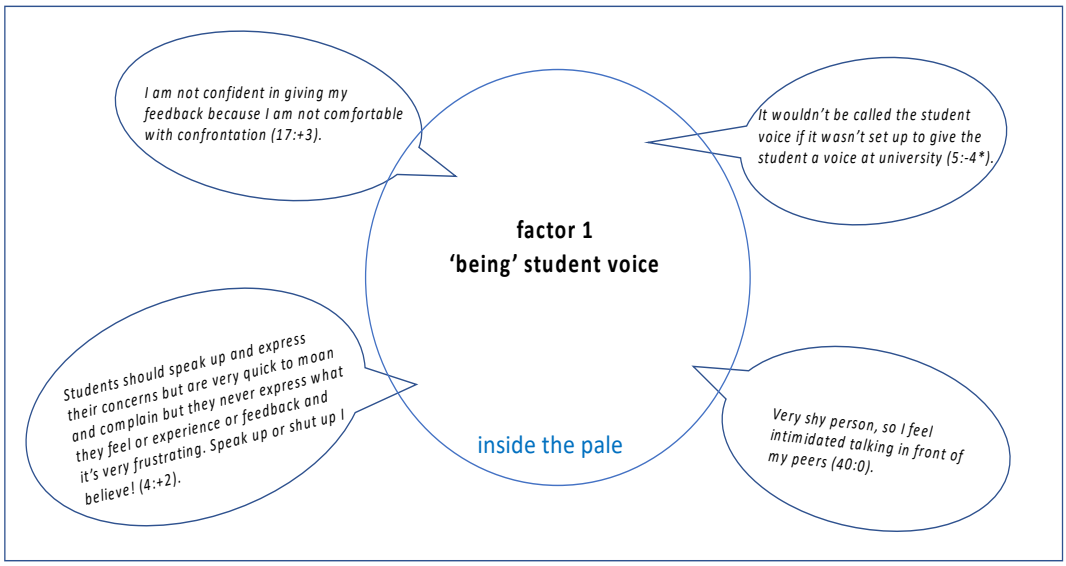

Figure 4.1: 'Being' student voice.

'Doing' student voice

'Doing' student voice students (see Figure 4.2) are playing the system/game (Bourdieu and Wacquant,1992; Burke, 2016), i.e. 'doing', as in understanding the limitations and playing for what they can get as narrated in response to statement **(21:0) Student voice is tokenistic in the way it involves students**:

> I think most students don't care about the student voice and use if for what *tangible aspects they can get out of it i.e. cookies. However, in a way it has to be like that. They don't realise getting involved is good for future prospects. They live for the 'here and now' and care only about themselves.*

They are unintimidated **(40:-4*)**, confident to use their voice **(1:+4)**, honest **(4:+4)**, voice their true opinion **(3:-3*),** and are confident about their ability to effect change **(37:-2).** These are their defining attributes.

'Doing' student voice's channel to formal systems is "open" **(27:-3*): I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous** and *I am happy to give my*

feedback and have my name attached for the record. They have the courage to speak out (Lock and Strong, 2010) and demonstrate the quality of resilience (Barnett, 2009).

Similar to **'seeing'**, and different from **'being'**, their sense of self and associated agency is apparent from their ability to speak out. These students were the only factor to register a positive score for having influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters **(26:+1*).** They are the only factor inhabiting practiced space, but indications from the significant (**+1***) score for statement **26** and the use of *could* for statement **1** suggest that they perceive their influence to be lower than it potentially could be, and they appear to be pushed "outside the pale", rejected as a consequence of their ability to be confrontational **(4:+4). The feedback I give is honest.** *I agreed with this card as it's true I happily give my honest feedback, regardless of the impact.*

'**Doing**' students acquire social capital from using their voice collectively (**11:+2)**. They are the most community-focussed, happy for their action to influence future generations **(30:+3*) and** feel less of a power divide with staff. This may be influenced by maturity **(24:+3)**.

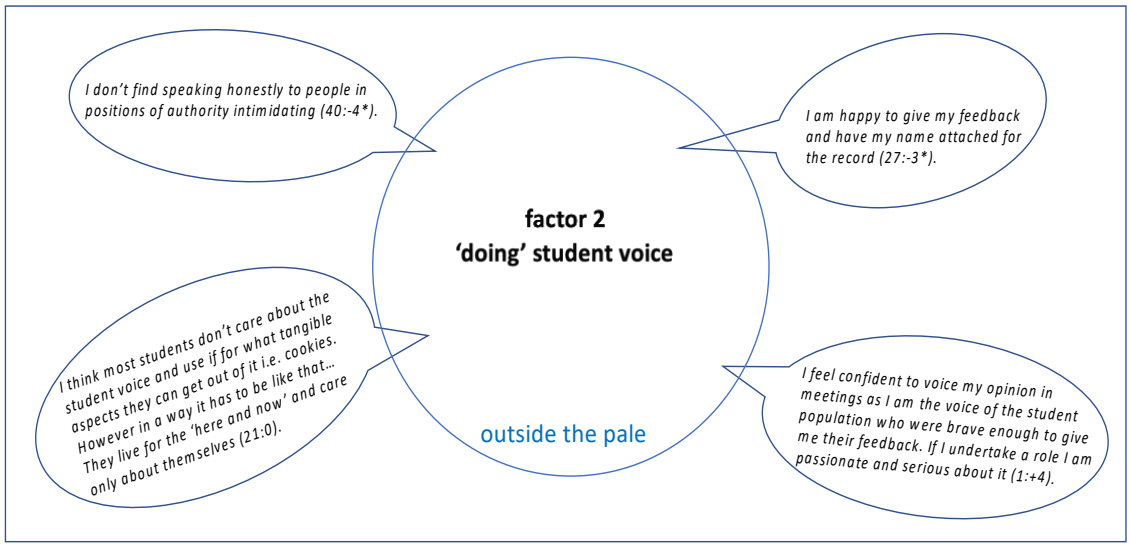

Figure 4.2: 'Doing' student voice.

‘Seeing’ student voice.

‘Seeing’ student voice (see Figure 4.3) students are unconvinced by student voice, seeing it for what it is. They suggest that if student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same (**39:0***). To a higher degree than the other factors, they believe that **feedback is taken out of context to suit the university’s agenda** (**31:+1)**, and that **student voice pretends to be about listening to students (5:-1).** They are registering ambivalence that **staff ask for feedback because they are told to by the university (23:0)**, and that **SV is set up for staff not students** (**22:0*).** They find processes intimidating **(40:0),** inconsistent **(10:+2),** and do not trust systems **(38:-1*),** although locally they trust lecturers. These students disagree (more than the other factors) that lecturers ignore their comments **(7:-3).** They don’t take SV seriously, as nothing ever changes **(37:+1*)**. As they think reporting is accurate (**6:+1**), this may indicate that true dialogue is constrained.

Similar to the other factors, ‘**seein**g’ students are dissatisfied with the student body as indicated in their placement of statement **(17:+3): Students moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback, they keep quiet**; but their narratives suggest that students are silenced because *they have been ignored in the past or feel nothing can be done.*

‘Seeing’ students are defined by their position on collective voice, making no connection to their peers through SV **(12:-4*)**. Despite the fact that 40% of these students have representative experience, one at university level, they strongly deny it represents all students **(14:-4)** and that processes allow all students to participate **(9:-1*)**. There is some suggestion that students have concerns but fail to raise them; and election processes are questioned, as is the use of a representative when not a friend. They are interested in results for themselves and not future generations.

These students are playing in a malign way, drifting on the perimeter and wandering at will, unchallenged (De Certeau, 1984). Nomadically, they choose neutral space (Deluze and Guattari,1986), which may offer the opportunity for being in other ways; but Barnett (2007) suggests that application of the rhizome concept to learning necessitates consideration of power distribution in smooth space and, in the case of

‘**seeing’** students, their will to learn is compromised by striated structures that exclude and deny them the opportunity to fully develop dispositions and qualities for epistemic becoming (Barnett, 2009). Theirs is a narrative that tells us that students are brave enough to talk to them, and that they possess the confidence to speak out; but their voice is not heard, as processes exclude them **(9:-1*)** and they are disenfranchised and have opted out **(26:-3).** They could be mobilised to make a difference as articulated in response to **(1:+4)**: **I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings.** *If I did attend the meetings, I would give my honest opinion and I would be confident in doing this.*

They are sceptical of the mechanisms that “allow” voice to be heard and so have opted out. They do not need student voice, but without public space, there is nowhere for them in their plurality to realise their collective power to speak in their own voices and act along with others, allowing for voices seldom listened to, to be audible and visible (Greene, 1995). The everyday experience of exclusion experienced in the university space, motivated ‘**seeing’** students to articulate (Wendel and Aidoo, 2015) that student voice is a construction erected by the university, bound by tokenism, that fails to encompass the diversity of the student body. While rhetoric is making education more relevant to changing labour markets, the “other” remains on the boundaries as the “outsider within” (Housee, 2018: 11).

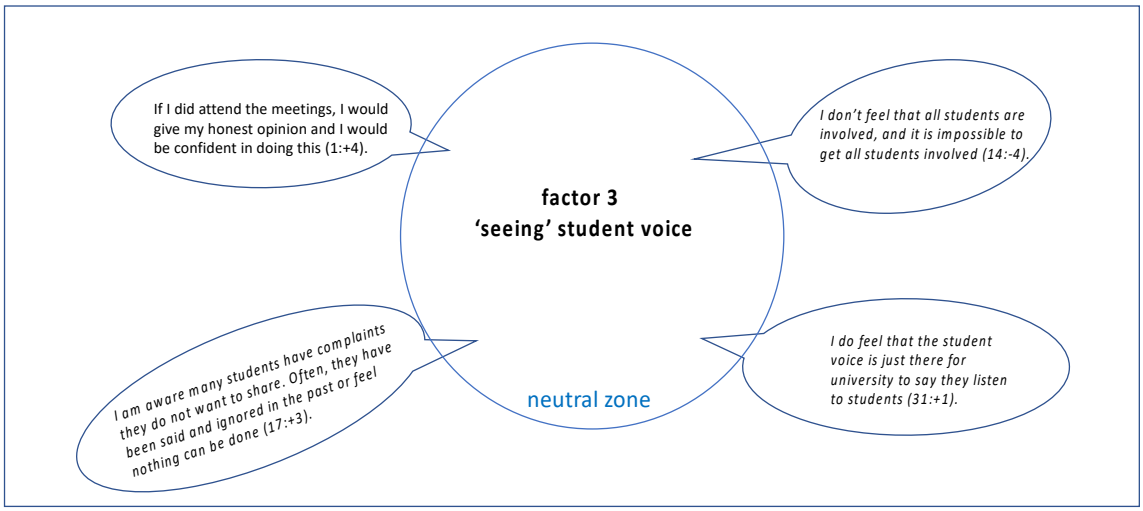

Figure 4.3: 'Seeing' student voice.

Research question 2: How are students positioned within student voice practiced space?

Students' positions

Q as a social constructionist research tool in the qualitative tradition is designed to explore the subjective dimension of any issue towards which different subject positions can be expressed (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004, Watts and Stenner, 2012). I have presented full and summary factor interpretations to reveal my methodological thinking, with the distinguishing statements, as ranked at the top and bottom for each factor, derived from the LIS file, which presented the array for each of the three factors (refer to appendix 6). I added the qualitative comments to bring the factors to life, narrative action reveals the stories students are telling as subject positions or viewpoints (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004; Watts and Stenner, 2012) and students in the three factors I have named **'Being'**, **'Seeing'** and **'Doing'** student voice, are constrained in different ways by discourses that constitute norms and set up boundaries, which student voice exists to challenge (Nelson, 2014).

'Being' student voice, similar to the construct illuminated through the student representatives focus group narratives, confirms the predominant viewpoint in the

reviewed literature, that discursive practices in education have constructed a notion of student voice predicated upon the elevation of knowledge acquisition as product above learning as an emergent process of becoming. They are **'being'** student voice as objects, this is far removed from them gaining the dispositions and qualities through critical dialogue represented in Barnett's (2009:438) "principles for nurturing human being". **'Doing'** student voice is associated with a view of a confident group that understand student voice is socially constructed, yet believe in the process and see it as leading to a set of actions (doing) that make a difference to the institution as a whole. But they are constrained by their ability to speak out. **'Seeing'** student voice represents those that are sceptical of the concept. They see SV as a process that is required for the benefit of the university rather than students.

In a final stage of interpretation, I conceptualise these three constructions of student voice spatially to reveal power relations interrupting the ability for students' epistemic becoming through their student voice practice.

Research question 3: How do power relations manifest within student voice practiced space?

In a novel Q interpretation, I use the descending array of differences between factors data from the LIS file to distinguish each position and (re)present student voice as a spatialisation, explicating power relations within the university practiced space.

To add novelty to my Q methodology interpretation, I looked for ways to understand how power relations manifest within university practiced space. I used a theoretical framework of social theories to illuminate the spatial relationship of the three student voice positions, presented as '**Being', 'Doing'** and '**Seeing'** student voice. And I looked towards possibilities for (re) positioning student voice agentically.

I was inspired by De Certeau's (1984) imaginative treatment of space, and as a visual learner I started to map the interaction between the three factors as a Venn diagram. The use of a modified Venn diagram as depicted in qualitative research is a well-used technique. Nested circles are used to facilitate the deeper understanding of the

interrelatedness and dimensions of complex concepts (Moir and Carter, 2012). It allows for the depiction of overlapping and shared aspects of a concept (Lozano, 2008), depicting the interaction between the parts of the whole (Moir and Carter, 2012).

Spatialising as a visualization provides a deeper understanding of the interrelatedness and dimensions characterised as spatial (Lozano, 2008). Spaces become political the very moment they are occupied (Wendel and Aidoo, 2015). Spatial epistemologies situate, reveal and materialise politics at work (ibid). Spatialising student voice enables students' narratives to be positioned by their similarities and differences (see Figure 4.4) in their occupation of student voice practiced space. Imagined spaces are critical to knowing power (Wendel and Aidoo, 2015). The university practiced space is problematised within a theoretical framework of sociological theorists reviewed in the second part of chapter 2, who allow me to interpret power as influencing student voice practice.

> Yet, more and more in the world we live in, we see our environment as "an instantaneous configuration of positions" (De Certeau, 1984: 117) - one we are required to make sense of as much as to act in. Narrative is our faithful standby in this task. To use it well, we need to focus not only on place and space and what we mean by those words but on others' notions of them and on how we describe, inscribe and interpret the meaning of our own movements – and others' – in them.
>
> (Parker, 2014:97)

Parker (2014:74) makes the point that speaking about narrative space "makes little sense without considering the places within it and our relationships with them": ways of "being" within a student identity; acceptable behaviours; and those which are excluded explicitly and by omission (Nelson, 2015). "It is, after all, our own sense or understanding of spaces and places from which we create narratives about them, or project narratives *onto* them" (Parker, 2014:74). As a framing device, stories are possible by projecting narratives onto settings as places of action, where action takes precedence over place, allowing people to be repositioned in a new place "where the oppressed can speak" (Parker, 2014:77), as such space allows this movement.

Difference between factors 1 and 2

No	Statement	factor 1	array	factor 2	array	difference	rank	factor 1 'Being'	factor 2 'Doing'
40	I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating	0.303	0	-2.136	-4	2.438	1	passive	assertive
1	I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings	0.247	0	2.013	+4	-1.765	2	diffident	self-assured
27	I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous	0.070	0	-1.665	-3	1.736	3	invisible	open
10	Student voice processes are inconsistent	-1.139	-2	0.591	+1	-1.731	4	unfunctional	functional
26	I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters	-0.591	-1	0.549	+1	-1.140	5	ineffective	active
4	The feedback I give is honest	1.104	+2	2.152	+4	-1.048	6	false	honest

Difference between factors 1 and 3

No	Statement	factor 1	array	factor 3	array	difference	rank	factor 1 'Being'	factor 3 'Seeing'
12	Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers	1.052	+2	-2.302	-4	3.354	1	individualistic	isolated
1	I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings	0.247	0	2.427	+4	-2.179	2	diffident	confident
10	Student voice processes are inconsistent	-1.139	-2	0.928	+2	-2.067	3	unfunctional	functional
14	All students are represented in the student voice	0.647	1	-1.386	-4	2.033	4	representative	unrepresentative
9	Student voice processes allow all students to participate	1.196	+3	-0.565	-1	1.761	5	inclusive	tokenistic
31	Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the universities agenda	-0.820	-1	0.575	+1	-1.395	6	trusting	sceptical

Difference between factors 2 and 3

No	Statement	factor 2	array	factor 3	array	difference	rank	factor 2 'Doing'	factor 3 'Seeing'
12	Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers	0.358	0	-2.302	-4	2.660	1	collegiate	isolated
30	I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback others will	1.102	3	-0.783	-2	1.884	2	generous	Disillusioned
40	I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating	2.136	-4	-0.262	0	-1.873	3	assertive	Silenced
26	I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters	0.549	1	-1.177	-3	1.727	4	agentic	Disenfranchised
27	I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous	-1.665	-3	0.048	0	-1.713	5	heard	Unheard

Figure 4.4: Differences between factors

Student voice practiced space

The students that collectively make up the study participants are enacting different practices within the same field (McKenzie, 2016) located within three distinct parameters **'being', 'doing'** and **'seeing'** student voice. Cook-Sather (2006) suggests that silence can result from fear, resistance or resonance, and this is apparent in the narrative told by the students. The normative culture of formal processes is supressing voice. All are subjugated in different ways, and risk being undeveloped (Barnett, 2018). '**Being'** students unknowingly and knowingly are subject and subjugated by their lack of confidence **(40:-4)** and by the system. '**Doing'** are silenced by their self-assured approach. '**Seeing'** students are silenced by their dissonance **(1:+4)** with the process, which is not delivering action from their voice. '**Being' student voice** is diffident **(1:0*),** passive **(40:0)** and **unfunctional 10:-2*),** "inside the pale" of acceptable behaviour as communicated in the rhetoric of student voice and narrated by these students. '**Doing' student voice** is agentic **(26:+1*)**, but the scores indicate this is limited, and they are pushed "outside the pale" as they have a capacity for confrontation **(4:+4),** they are filtered through their self-assured **(1:+4)** manner and are "not allowed" to deliver the impact they could. '**Seeing'** students nomadically (Deluze and Guattari,1986) practice in a different space (De Certeau, 1984), as outcasts on the inside (Bourdieu and Champagne, 1999), they are unheard **(27:0)**, choosing the neutral zone. These students are considered, in that they could do more **(15:+3*)**, but this would require (re) appropriation, and they are sceptical **(31:+1)**, narrating the space as tokenistic **(9:-1*)** and unrepresentative of the student body **(14:-4)**.

Factors 2 and 3 are similar in their agentic qualities and different in their socialising features. Factors 1 and 2 are polar opposites: they are object and subject in student voice. Factors 1 and 3 have similarities in agentic qualities, but where Factor 1 is invisible (27:0) due to their lack of confidence (1:0*) and a product of student voice, Factor 3 is choosing not to participate due to its limitations to represent them and others. Shaping '**being'** students' relationship to themselves, affects the potential for mobilising their social movements (Foucault 1977a;1977b). This has implications for limiting the formulation of their identity: "within the subject position of 'student' certain

ways of talking, acting and being are acceptable and others are excluded" (Nelson, 2015:4). This creates subjects that fit (Foucault, 1978; Lock and Strong, 2010). Fielding's (2004) work suggests that without acknowledging relationships between power and student voice mechanisms, it is possible to disguise complex and, at times, manipulative relationships, which may have significant implications for the students involved (Fielding, 2004; Freeman, 2014). '**Being'** student voices that are rendering themselves invisible. Their voices are created by the relations in which they find themselves rather than the circumstances required for change and reform (Mockler and Groundwater Smith, 2015).

There is a dichotomy between student involvement and the need to maintain social order. Students are being obedient and conforming by showing obedience to authority and acting with "correct behaviour" (Bartlett and Burton, 2016:17). This entrenches domination. They may be oblivious of how their views have been shaped by hegemonic forces that may operate against their own best interests (Kreber, 2013). This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, to a sort of "mimicry" where one acts as "one should" (Hazell and Kiel, 2018:61). Bourdieu sees this as misrecognition, where an everyday situation is not recognised for what it is because it is not cognised within the dispositions and habitus of the student (Bourdieu, 2000; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). He suggests that subjects are objectivised – normalised to reproduce certain patterns in society. This is not a matter of duping them: they are complicit in their subjectification (Lock and Strong, 2010).

According to Cook-Sather (2006), issues of power, communication and participation are central to SV. Cook-Sather suggests that advocates of representing others with one voice run the risk of silencing others. This monolithic (2006), one-dimensional (Greene, 1995) quality presumes homogeneity and overlooks the differentiated needs and perspectives of students (Cook-Sather, 2006). Fielding (2004) suggests that a homogenised and undifferentiated notion of student voice accommodates and advantages the privileged in society, with the danger of accommodating the status quo. In Bourdieusian terms, students are experiencing symbolic violence (Bourdieu

and Passeron, 1977:4; Connolly and Healy, 2004; James, 2015; Burke et al., 2016). They are unaware of the situation, being conditioned by their habitus to be "subjects that fit" (Foucault, 1978; Lock and Strong, 2010:247). We are molding the next generation as docile bodies: domesticated and institutionalised through subjugation (Foucault, 1977a;1982). As Habermas (1992) posits, a tendency to pick the right students for representative positions exacerbates homogeneity, and students who are perceived to be problematic are not selected (Thomson, 2011).

There is an element of tokenism, whether this is intentional or not (Bragg, 2007), in inviting students to perform in this space when they do not understand the rules of the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and do not have (or do not feel they have) the necessary social confidence (Rudduck and a Fielding, 2006). They are "fish out of water" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009:1107; Grenfell, 2012:56). The fish has to work out how to operate in this new field, which has implications for social dominance. From a Foucauldian structuralist perspective, partnership is problematised through power relations within this relationship which render partnership untenable.

Student voice as socially constructed

As previously discussed, my social constructionist interpretive framework allows me to apply a sociological gaze on student voice practiced space to explicate through students' narratives their collective reality. Social reality is socially constructed in what students think, do and say alone and, mainly, collectively (Stainton Rogers, 2011); and it is imposed through structures in which they operate, where institutional rituals, practices and narratives inform and shape their version of reality.

'Being' students are defined by their face-value acceptance of student voice. Unlike Factor 2 and 3 students, they put their highest value on student experience statements and are the most enthusiastic and positive commenters on the effectiveness and authenticity of student voice processes and practices. They believe the rhetoric, noting that student experience is *always talked about and em*phasised. Rhetoric is based on convincing students that their experience is paramount (Barnett, 2018). They refer to

student voice as *title* in post-Q interviews, objectifying and disconnecting it from the agentic qualities of speaking or being heard.

Student voice is really about students' experience (hence the title). It's the main way to help students throughout the university.

Nelson (2015) suggests that the way student voice is relayed to students may come to define it as authentic to them, as can be seen from a student's (*post-Q* FG) comments.

I've learnt that student voice is not only for staff, it's for everyone; (other whispers) *it's called student voice* (laughter)*.*

Furthermore '**being'** students are highlighting that student voice is socially constructed:

It wouldn't be called the student voice if it wasn't ***set up*** *to give the student a voice at university.*

Factor 2 and 3 students make reference to the socially constructed nature of student voice in different ways. '**Doing'** students see it for what it is **and** are reflexive of the individualistic nature of their peers; their narrative suggests they are open to bribery (Williams, 2013).

I think most students don't care about the student voice and use if for what tangible aspects they can get out of it i.e. cookies. However, in a way it has to be like that.

Dividing practices

Dividing practices enable and constrain new knowledge, depending on institutional context, who is speaking and their relation to positions of power (Foucault 1977a;1977b).

There was consensus between the factors, who all registered strong agreement to the statement **(17:+3): Students' moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback, they keep quiet**. However, although there was consensus in their score, there was contradiction in their narratives. There is a strong theme of

frustration with peers' disengagement running through the students' narratives. For '**being'** students, the issue of diffidence was revealed. For '**doing'** students, there was an indication of their agency **(26:+1*);** and for '**seeing'** students there was an indication that they were disenfranchised **(26:-3)** and that the channel was closed, as they had opted out of formal channels due to lack of peer engagement and lack of evidence of action from their feedback.

Factor 1: *I believe that everyone has a voice and should use viewpoints constructively. Students should speak up and express their concerns but are very quick to moan and complain but they never express what they feel or experience or feedback and it's very frustrating. Speak up or shut up I believe!*

Factor 1: *I am usually one of those people as I am not confident in giving my feedback because I am not comfortable with confrontation.*

Factor 2: *Because I give honest feedback it frustrates me when others don't. If people aren't prepared to speak up, they can't expect change.*

Factor 2: *Students frequently moaned about aspects of lectures, but only a small percent would actually voice their opinions or question why lectures were in the format they moaned about. Plenty of opportunity to voice opinion but most refused to openly voice opinion.*

Factor 3: *I am aware many students have complaints they do not want to share. Often, they have been said and ignored in the past or feel nothing can be done. Lots of things are complained about on social networking or through talks but a lot of time it does not come up in feedback (particularly if it is about a specific lecturer as this is uncomfortable).*

Students provided an alternative reason for mediating their feedback, demonstrated as empathy and loyalty towards staff, indicating that they attributed value to their relationships with staff, as illuminated through the response from '**doing'** students *Because you don't want to hurt their feelings* to the Q statement **(34:-1): Lecturers are scared of what I have to say about their teaching.**

Students are concerned about hurting the feelings of staff, and staff suffer as a response to negative comments (Ball, 2003; Arthur, 2009; Nygaard and Belluigi, 2010). This hampers action. Furthermore, comments need to be considered in the

moment they are received to take in emotional and environmental factors for both parties. This requires the skills and emotional capacity to articulate, and consideration of power dynamics and environmental factors that enable values that support voice. Students hold their relationships with staff in high regard and through these relationships have built trust; but they are less collegiate with their peers.

Social capital

'**Seeing'** and '**being'** students are indicating a lack of interest in building social capital for the next generation through their significant rankings of statement 30: **I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will. 'Being'** were neutral and **'seeing'** registered disagreement at **(-2*)** with the statement. Conversely '**doing'** students had a collegiate subject position and gave this statement a significant **(+3*)** ranking. '**Doing'** students possess the agentic quality of social capital and are generous with their forward thinking and values, valuing their ability to leave a legacy for others, a key benefit for the future.

Although '**being'** students perceive their inclusivity with peers **(12:+2*),** this is negated by the lack of collegiality narrated in their response to **(30:0)**. They are isolating in their relationship with peers outside their zone: habitus finds habitus (Oliver and Reilly, 2010 in Thatcher and Halvorsrud, 2016), and this keeps these students in their comfort zone. **'Being'** students are demonstrably registering an individualistic behavioural trait (Barnett, 2018) in their student voice positioning, highlighted in the response from '**doing'** students.

They don't realise getting involved is good for future prospects. They live for the "here and now" and care only about themselves.

The majority of these students joined the university after the introduction of £9,000 tuition fees in 2012. Switching from provider to user (Czerniawski and Kidd, 2011) reinforces individualism and competition at the expense of community. The data highlights that '**being'** students, as the majority position, are exhibiting a selfish nature, which offers worrying signs of a "social recession", with declining social mobility and

inequality, attributed by Lawson (2007) to a consumerist society and a "me first" generation. The trend for personalisation is further endorsing consumerist behaviour in an "educational supermarket" (Wisby, 2011:38). '**Seeing'** students' narrative tells of isolation from their peers **(12:-4*);** and as they are not benefiting from student voice, it follows that they hold no faith in helping future generations. Theirs is a tale of disillusion **(30*:-2)**.

Agency

The narrative tells us that individual and collective confidence is an issue, and that contributing views has emotional consequences. *Mouse squeak* (see Figure 4.5) shows that a meeting represents a field of play where entry has been afforded to the hegemonic, who are more readily credited with objectivity and have a structural advantage (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). Objective relations determine:

> …who can cut somebody off, ask questions, speak at length without being interrupted, or disregard interruptions, etc., who is condemned to strategies of denigration (of interest and interested strategies) or ritual refusals to answer, or to stereotypical formulas…
>
> (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992:258)

Taking a meeting as an example, the objective positions are taken by agents that have a stake in the operation of the field and are determined by the amount of weight in capital they have (Bourdieu, 1986) e.g. in an academic field, management and staff. These agents are continually vying for position in the field, and this struggle is governed by doxa, the "pre-verbal taken for granted" (Bourdieu, 1990:68), as rules/codes of the game which need to be observed to exist in the field. This includes written and unwritten rules which may be learned as agents gain experience (Grenfell, 2012). This is complex and dependent on environmental forces: meeting structure, agenda, position of actors, behaviour of actors and micro politics. Failure to follow the rules may result in non-acceptance of, or the expelling of, an individual by other "actors", with the expelled actor locked out of the conversation (silenced).

I remember my first meeting as a school rep being very daunting. Getting this big pack through about a week before and the pack must have been about 50, 60, 70

pages and I didn't understand a word of that. I didn't really have anyone to go to to talk me through that as it was such a big part of literature, and when I got to the meeting, and then I got to this room and I didn't know anyone in the room and they were all very senior members of staff and I felt completely underprepared and the chair of the meeting asked me my opinion and I did a little mouse squeak and I look back now and think that was funny but at the time I was terrified in that meeting I can't remember what was said in that meeting - I just sat there thinking oh god… I didn't understand anything that was being spoken about and I wasn't equipped for that at all ('doing' student, post-Q FG).

Figure 4.5: Mouse squeak.

A student entering this field is unaware of the doxa, which will never be penetrable due to power, agency and capital rendering partnership untenable. Habitus does not match the social context of the field, and there is understanding of the underlying rules of the game (Grenfell, 2012). In *mouse squeak* this is represented by the fear experienced from the environment, resulting in the emotional barrier to speaking, a "fish out of water" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009:1107; Grenfell, 2012:56). Knowing the rules of the game is the central component to navigating a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Burke, 2016). This student is narrating their unconscious incompetence (Howell, 1992) in entering the field this meeting presents. *I didn't understand anything that was being spoken about and I wasn't equipped for that at all (student 'doing' post Q FG).*

In *mouse squeak*, students are "fish out of water" and need to know the rules of the game to stay afloat. If they are to swim, they *need to experience to* learn. This is the requirement for knowing dialogically. But that requires social and linguistic confidence, which few students are deemed to have (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006).

Mouse squeak into *Voice stuff matures* students tells the story of a student who started as unconsciously incompetent and became unconsciously competent. It was the initial experience that provided the critical incident to start the process of becoming. Through resilience, this student found their voice within the student voice

practiced space. This opportunity is not afforded to all students and my thesis provides insights to redress this lack of opportunity. Students come to university to have a life-changing experience and it is the duty of the university to facilitate this maturation process for all. In a (re)positioned student voice, possibilities for agency are made available.

Voice stuff matures students (see Figure 4.6) is a post-Q FG story recounted by *a* 'doing' student, two years post-graduation, who had experience in the representative system from course representative to students' union officer. This is the same student who narrated the *mouse squeak* story, indicating that resilience is afforded to the position of '**doing'** and as indicated in the opportunity SV affords to the resilient student (Barnett, 2018).

*Voice stuff matures students – since I've left university I've been to interviews where I've pulled most of my experience from this. It's been absolutely key to getting my jobs, lots of different skills I got from the student voice. I'm quite employable now [*what are they?] *listening, listening to students, popular with employers and being able to represent and problem solve, being able to resolve difficult situations, being confident and being assertive. I've got that from the full-time position. I'm a lot more assertive than I used to be when I was a school or class rep, so maybe some kind of assertiveness training might be quite useful.*

Yesterday I went for a job and it is from the experience I got through student voice, particularly in my students' union role, that I managed to secure that job. One of the questions she asked me was whether I was comfortable talking to crowds, comfortable talking to people and I was able to draw on the fact that I'd done graduation speeches, I'd represented people, I'd held meetings, I'd listened to students and fed that back to various people. These are all the skills I'd managed to get through the student voice system at university.

Figure 4.6: Voice stuff matures students

It can be seen from '**doing'** student voice that student voice can help in the becoming process, but the students that are benefitting are mature students and it would be pertinent to assume that they have developed their habitus prior to coming to university, and that they understand the limitations of student voice and it does not prevent them from voicing their opinions. Their responses are positive in many instances and they have clearly built good relationships with staff which they use

primarily for voice purposes, and primarily outside the university practiced student voice space.

At the start of the thesis, I set out to influence practice authentically and came up close to the micropolitics of power, which impacted on my ability to realise the democratic potential of student voice. The key narrative is about being voiceless and unheard. Factor 1: '**Being'** exemplifies this, as the main factor and the majority position of student voice. These students are in a strange culture where they are '**being'** voiceless. But there are opportunities, as the critical dialogue is indicating, narrated in '**doing'** and '**seeing'** student voice.

The narrative has confirmed the individualistic nature of students, which has increased with the increased impact of marketisation. Students are becoming more demanding within student voice space and this is fed by pandering to their needs through unstrategic action. Furthermore, *we need to filter out what is actually relevant*. They do not expect action, just communication in a zone of engagement (Barnett, 2018). Without a sense of community, students' ability to develop their identity is constrained by not developing the disposition of a will to speak. Unless the student develops the ability to use their voice or their willingness to speak, becoming may be unduly limited (Barnett 2009).

The larger proportion of students – those '**doing'** and '**seeing' –** see student voice as a construction. Understanding the constructed nature of SV does not present a barrier to '**doing'** students using their voice **(40:-4*)**, indicating their resilience and ability to play the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Conversely it makes a big difference to '**seeing'** students, who are disengaged **(12:-4*)** and disillusioned **(30:-2*)** with student voice, and it ranks higher than the other factors in a number of statements that question the authenticity of student voice. '**Seeing'** students, through understanding the constructed nature of SV, have become disenfranchised **(26:-3)** and have opted out to "the in between space" (De Certeau, 1984:98). This may give them a sense of freedom for their dialogue (Lock and Strong, 2010), but has implications for the university as the voices of '**doing'** are resisted **(26:+1*)** and those of '**seeing'** silenced

(40:0), with neither contributing to practice, and two thirds of the possible impact being lost. This is mirrored in the literature, as when Biddulph (2011) suggests students are tokenistic contributors, with their engagement in processes often devoid of any opportunity to exercise agency over the curriculum.

In HE, we set up systems to solicit information that we want to hear, which might be cynical and manipulative, intentionally or not masking the "real" interests of those in power' (Bragg 2007:344). We try to marry up responses to a number of things, with our focus on getting good NSS results, as this measures success, albeit inauthentically. Through systems, we are embedding emotional regulation, trying to control students' behaviour. We put student representatives into a civic role, part of the political apparatus (Breslin, 2011), where we get them to communicate in the way we want them to, fishing for comments. This institutional narrative tells a tale of students active in their voice; but students' talk is telling alternative stories, as represented by the three factors (re) presented as zones of engagement, the key parameters of student voice within the university space: *spatialising student voice (Figure 4.7)*.

Mechanisms are constraining opportunities to fit structures. '**Seeing'** students have disengaged and are missing the opportunity to exercise agency over the curriculum. Those who demonstrate their resilience are afforded opportunity, as in *Voice matures students***.** However, these '**doing'** students are narrating that they are being pushed out of processes. '**Doing'** students demonstrate the disposition of a will to speak (Barnett, 2009). They demonstrate qualities: confidence, resilience, self-assurance and collegiality: values more commensurate with growth as illustrated in the transformation from *Mouse squeak* to *Voice stuff matures students*. '**Seeing'** are divided. They indicate a propensity towards these same qualities, but they are interrupted by their disenfranchisement, due to the encounters they have rejected. There is an opportunity here to re-engage these students and they indicate that they are open to possibilities.

Narratives also tell that student voice is dividing students. Deluze and Guattari's (1986) rhizome metaphor suggests "nomadic" to consider space and people's relationship to it and suggest that this may offer an alternative way of being. This is the neutral zone, the space that '**seeing'** students are inhabiting and this as "smooth" (ibid) space is where they opt out of student voice processes and practices, choosing informal networks. They also indicate that they are excluded, and this is by "striated" borders delineating their student voice space (Deluze and Guattari, 1986). '**Being'** as the majority voice in student voice practiced space is creating a monoculture (Barnett, 2018) informing educational development, with **seeing's** voice unrepresented, furthermore '**seeing'** students risk non-development (ibid). **'Being'** students have some responsibility for their peers exclusion, they are unable to appreciate the perspectives of their peers because they have a narrow position to draw upon and as noted earlier, habitus finds habitus (Oliver and Reilly, 2010 in Thatcher and Halvorsrud, 2016), and this keeps these students in their comfort zone. Similarly, this was evident in student representatives' narratives where they refer to students outside their position as *non-normal* and a *different kettle of fish*.

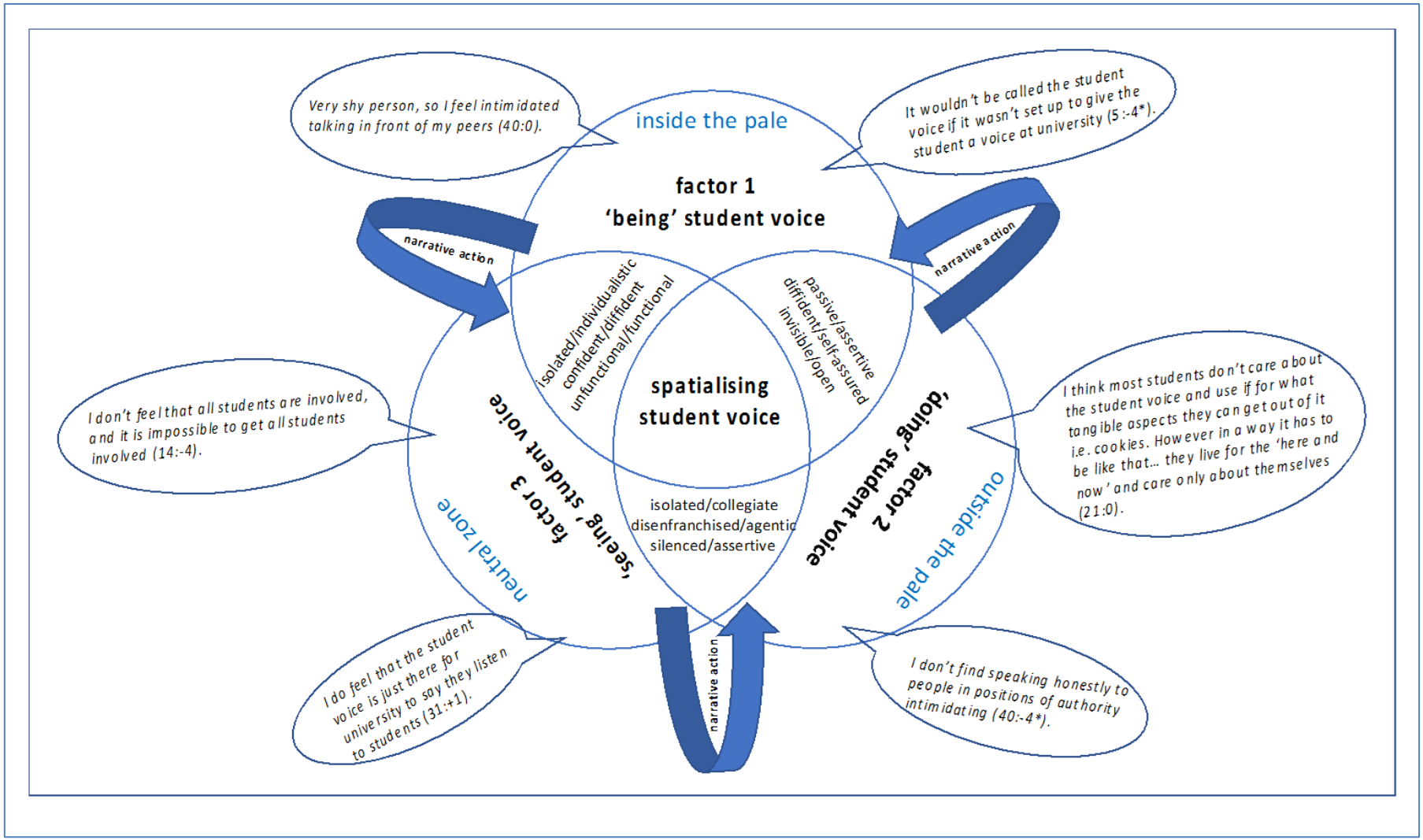

Figure 4.7: Spatialising student voice.

In this chapter I have addressed my three research questions:

To address research question 1, I have illuminated student representatives' constructions of student voice through narratives of their experience of student voice processes and practices captured through focus groups. It was apparent that these student representatives confirmed their lack of understanding of the notion of student voice and that they enacted socially constructed practices of representation with their disengaged peers, this returned insight that processes exclude the non-normal student described as a *different kettle of fish* by representatives.

To address research question 2, Narratives captured in the focus groups addressing question 1 contributed to the formulation of my Q set which along with practice insights and reviewed literature was administered to five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students. Following Q sorting I extracted three Q factors and used narrative action to work with critical dialogue within an interpretive framework in the social constructionist tradition to expose three Q factors as distinct subject positions: **'being', 'doing'** and **'seeing'** student voice.

To address research question 3, in a novel second stage of Q interpretation, I use my theoretical framework of social theories to examine power relations spatially within university practiced space and illuminate positional nuances as zones of engagement with student voice. Spatialising as a visualization provides a deeper understanding of the interrelatedness and dimensions characterised as spatial (Lozano, 2008). I conceptualise students' positions as three distinct parameters where students' voices are constrained within the university provided student voice space. *Spatialising student voice* tells a story of students subjugated in their student voice practice in different ways. **'Being'** student voice operate within the pale of acceptable behaviour; subjects of and subjected by the discourse. Conversely **'doing'** and **'seeing'** student voice see student voice processes and practices as socially constructed. **'Doing'** play the game of student voice, but they operate outside the pale of acceptable behaviour and are subjugated through their ability to speak out. **'Seeing'** are disenfranchised, student voice fails to encompass the diversity of the student body and they withdraw

their voice from formal channels choosing the neutral zone to channel their voice.

The nature of agency requires that students have the opportunity to find their own voice and opinion on contentious issues, rather than these being “constructed out of exam-acceptable voices” (Rudduck and Fielding, 2006:224). Only when students have contributed to their learning experience in this way can they receive this affirmation. Power relations explicated by *spatialising student voice* present a barrier to students’ development of necessary dispositions and qualities for “nurturing student being” (Barnett (2009:438), the polar opposite of **‘being’** student voice. The process of “epistemic becoming” (Barnett, 2009:435) requires students to develop emotionally and cognitively (Barnett, 2007; 2009); to engage socially (peer to peer and with staff) in critical dialogue to widen their perspectives (Mitra, Serriere and Burroughs, 2017). Student voice should enable all students to contribute actively pedagogically in their educational journey, for the growth of students, staff and ultimately the university.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

> The purpose of this work is to make explicit the systems of operational combination (les combinatoires d'operations) which also compose a “culture”, and to bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive or docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term “consumers”. Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others.
>
> (De Certeau,1984:xi)

This thesis has drawn upon a body of student voice literature that spans over 30 years, acknowledging its conception within democratic pedagogies. The intention of student voice was a profound re-imagination of education (Fielding, 2007), students’ voices constructed in dialogue and meaning-making and contributing to education development (Fielding, 2011) agentically. With increased marketisation, discursive practices in education have constructed a notion of “student voice” predicated upon an elevation of knowledge acquisition as product, above learning, as an emergent process of becoming.

My initial story about throwing unfavourable feedback in the bin was the tip of the iceberg as an early marker for what was to materialise within the changing landscape of HE. My motivation for, and the purpose of, the study was to understand student voice as an educational change agent, knowing that it could make a difference. I established that student feedback needed to be positive to tell a positive story of students’ HE experience. This I highlighted as misappropriation of the student voice, rendering processes fit only to serve the purposes of regulatory bodies: students’ narratives socially constructed at the expense of understanding and meaning. I enacted practice underpinned with values that sought to embed reciprocal dialogic practice with students, authenticating voice to provide the opportunity for growth. This practice was to forgo user-charging models of education. The bin has expanded.

UK HE is undergoing a quality transformation, and within this landscape student voice has status: it provides a measure of teaching excellence. As such, the purpose of student voice becomes the pervading driver for practice and for associated technologies for its capture. In order to count, student voice needs to be an evaluative measure practiced in “provided space”. Informal practice does not serve this purpose well. Metrics favour objective methods over subjective; they are neat, quick and provide measurement. But this measure has received criticism from scholars since the inception of the NSS as have the mechanisms for its capture.

My research purpose was to examine the potential for students’ active practice of student voice to enable their democratic participation in university processes, and to enrich participation and dialogue in relation to their epistemic development. I employed Q methodology within a social constructionist framework and addressed my three research questions fulfilling my research objectives:

- To illuminate students’ constructions of student voice.
- To explicate the power relations influencing the possibilities for students’ epistemic becoming through their student voice practice.

My thesis provided an opportunity to enter undiscovered territory, students’ lived experience of student voice processes and practices in HE was underrepresented in the literature. Insights from reviewed student voice literature, my student voice practice with students and narratives from student representatives were used in the first stage of my Q Methodology research to inform a Q set of propositions on student voice. I took the opportunity to examine these narratives and (re) presented as student representatives’ constructions of student voice. It was apparent that these students confirmed their lack of understanding of the notion of student voice and that they enacted socially constructed practices of representation with their disengaged peers, this returned insight that processes exclude the non-normal student described as a *different kettle of fish* by representatives.

In the second stage of my Q methodology research, five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students Q sorted the Q set of propositions into a subjectively

meaningful pattern providing their own unique perspective of their lived experience of student voice practiced space. By working with Q methodology within a social constructionist interpretive framework, through the narratives of these students, I have provided a new understanding of how students inhabit student voice practiced space. I have highlighted within the evidence base three different positions – '**being', 'doing'** and '**seeing'** student voice – and have, through examining their similarities and differences, highlighted that the construct is subjugating the larger '**being'** body of students who narrate their passive, diffident and individualistic qualities, and this impacts upon the development of character-building dispositions which should be enhanced by the students' experience of higher education. This raises concern, as these students are the majority listened-to voice within the university practiced student voice space. These students are operating inside the pale, within the boundaries of acceptable practice, normalised by practices they enact. The other two positions are pushed out: '**doing'** students, through their self-assured and confident stance – whilst they remain active – they indicate through their narratives that they are outside the pale of acceptable practice and not welcome in the space. **'Seeing'** students share attributes of both: they are confident, but silenced and inactive through their disenfranchisement with processes, they wander – in the neutral zone –unchallenged but excluded. They could be engaged but this would require (re) appropriation, and they are sceptical, narrating the space as tokenistic and unrepresentative of the student body.

My thesis has presented a snapshot of the student that is a product of metrification. The students in my study span a generation in the changing HE landscape, and now I am penning the conclusion, all have graduated, and the landscape is incrementally raising the profile of student voice, which has impact for students' educational potential. My results carry a warning. The majority position, represented zonally as '**being'** student voice, is unfunctional: they ineffectively, passively and invisibly practiced in the university space. The performative student is emerging from its performative interpretation to practice. Capturing student voice for performativity purposes alone perpetuates the cynical use of students as objects, passive in their

educational journey (Fielding, 2004), the snowflake generation, narrowing the maturation of students (Barnett, 2018), which is an impoverishment of the capacity of HE to play a more profound role in their lives (Dyhouse, 2007).

Students have, with the introduction and escalation of tuition fees, repositioned themselves within the discourses of marketisation: customers, then partners; an elevation from the classroom to the boardroom. This transition has afforded these partners high stakes and high expectations of their student experience; and while they are consumers of education, that they are partners remains a problematic concept. Good intentions to involve students are disturbed by the need to make student voice support an evidence base. Student voice practice and process are conflated by a lack of clarity in the notion of student voice, which creates uncertainty in its location and purpose within the university space, making it difficult to access or acknowledge.

The economising of the university (Barnett, 2018) has contributed significantly to zeitgeist student voice, which in UK HE is used as a measure of the quality of university teaching within quality frameworks. Metrification of student voice presents a risk to student voice practice in how it is defined and enacted if its primary purpose is to inform a narrative of students' positive experience. Its educational value is at the expense of the political agenda. This has implications for an HE education system that is on a trajectory of travel geared to the attainment of the Teaching Excellence Framework award with ratings of bronze, silver and gold, if the evidence base for determining the quality of provision is informed by a social construction of students' voices, (re)presented as *spatialising student voice*: three distinct parameters where power relations are constraining students' voices.

Spatialising student voice

The study has provided a new perspective on student voice. The expert narratives of student representatives informed my student voice Q set. This was Q sorted by five consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students and enhanced by their narratives captured post Q sort. I employed a social constructionist approach to my Q interpretation of the extracted factors to allow me to explicate as three distinct

constructions of student voice. In a novel further stage of interpretation, I examine the power relationships preventing students' agentic practice and conceptualise these positions spatially: *spatialising student voice* as three distinct parameters where students' voices are constrained within the university provided student voice space.

The reflexive use of Q methodology has enabled me to open the research process with students and enable their critical dialogue to narrate their lived experience. I made several refinements to my Q technique in order to make the procedure accessible to students. The learning this afforded students was captured in post-Q-sort focus groups and tells the story of them immersed in the study, making their subjectivity operant in their viewpoints and in their practice of the Q.

Limitations of the study

This study has been situated within a post-1992 university and I am cognisant of the difference found within other universities in relation to demographics and economic conditions relative to their environment. The results are not deemed to be generalisable to a larger population and it would be interesting to replicate the study with students from other types of HEIs.

The study is of small scale, and Q methodology is suitable for this purpose and has allowed me to present distinct positions of student voice as the subjective positions of students. I identified that there was a dearth of research which examined academics' viewpoints, and for this reason I have not focused on the viewpoints of staff. Given that this study has illuminated students subjugated within university space and, through the richness of their narratives, provides insight into the dispositions and qualities of these positions, it might be useful to carry out a similar Q sort with staff. This would help explore the extent to which their viewpoints are similar to those found in this research.

Recommendations

The study does not provide a quick fix to the student voice conundrum. As noted previously, interpretation of student voice is left to provider level and there are now numerous documented examples of good student voice practice; and yet we continue

to seek the answer as quick fixes to practice at the micro level when the bigger picture of the political landscape shows an absence of the conditions necessary for participatory, value-laden practice.

There is a need to re-establish the purpose of student voice. This study has provided an opportunity to take the temperature inside the university space and reveal through students' narratives these students' experience of processes and practices designed to inform their educational journey and that of future generations. The construct I present as a spatialisation is indicating that students have limited epistemic engagement to fulfill the ontological needs that are the necessary ingredients for "epistemic becoming" (Barnett, 2009:435). Evidence-based practice is misappropriating student voice through its social construction to tell the institutional story, which is removing the educative opportunity that student voice needs to deliver. Education has a responsibility to prepare students to meet the challenges presented by conflicts of the developing world and this is a necessary consideration in student voice practice going forward.

My research has illuminated that student voice processes and practices are excluding a body of *"non-normal"* students as highlighted in "*A different kettle of fish*" and narrated by '**seeing'** students. There is scope for research to explore conditions for opening up student voice channels and opportunities to the diversity of the student body.

The study has highlighted concerns for staff within a performative culture where they have temporal pressures that negate the opportunity to furnish students with the ontological aspects of learning that they require. Students indicate strongly through the Q that they value relationships with staff and that they hold trust high in this value. There is indication both from the literature and the narrative that staff are uncomfortable with the potential of negative feedback, and this I highlighted from my initial practice.

For over 30 years the literature has warned of the impact marketisation and consumerism could bring to the practice of student voice, and through students'

narratives I have confirmed that metrified student voice is subjugating the majority of students' voices. Zeitgeist student voice is gaining prominence in the assurance of quality of the HE agenda, and this raises concern for the developing and future HE product of marketisation.

This thesis as a theoretical piece provides another brick in the wall towards change in thinking, policy and practice (Wellington, 2010:138). It should inform thinking in possible directions for future research, policy and practice. In the light of my thesis, it is time to revisit the historical roots of student voice and to recognise that, in its translation to HE, it has been used to add voice to education in a way that has lost sight of its intentions. The purpose of student voice was to give students agency over their curriculum, and the intention of associated partnership was to open up opportunities for their influence. The benevolent impact affords all students the opportunity to build confidence, resilience and the social capital qualities afforded to those who are able to experience and negotiate communication, thus developing the disposition of a will to speak and the ability to participate in critical dialogue. This is epistemic becoming, and the university has a role to play in preparing students for the challenges presented by the conflicts of the developing world.

I have had the opportunity to discuss my findings at two conferences and I utilised the opportunity to perform a small version of the Q with staff in the UK and internationally. I was interested to find staff narratives of their experience of student voice processes and practices closely correlated to students' viewpoints. I will use this opportunity to explore the current landscape with staff and students.

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APPENDIX 1: Q SET

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	**no.**	**STATEMENT**	**+/-**	**SOURCE**	**THEME**	**ARRAY**	**NOTES**
2	1	I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings	P	Focus Group; O'Donovan 2010	agency	0 4 4	top factor 3 top factor 2
3	2	Students views are listened to in meetings	P	Breslin 2011; O'Donovan 2010	agency	2 2 2	All +2
4	3	Student voice processes do not enable me to voice my true opinion	N	Somekh 2011	authenticity	-1 -3 -1	
5	4	The feedback I give is honest	P	Focus Group; Nygaard & Belluigi 2010	authenticity	2 4 4	top factor 2 top factor 3
6	5	Student voice pretends to be about listening to students	N	Practice; Fielding, 2001	power	-4 -2 -1	bottom factor 1
7	6	The university is accurate in its reporting of student viewpoints	P	Hounsell, 2008; NUS 2012	authenticity	0 0 1	
8	7	Lecturers ask for feedback, but ignore comments	N	Czerniawski and Kidd 2011; Fielding and Mc Gregor 2005	power	-2 -1 -3	
9	8	Lecturers are interested in what I have to say about their teaching	P	Practice	processes	2 2 2	All +2
10	9	Student voice processes allow all students to participate	P	Practice; Williams 2013	community	3 1 -1	
11	10	Student voice processes are inconsistent	N	Practice; Focus Group	processes	-2 1 2	
12	11	Action results from students using their voice collectively	P	NUS 2012;Breslin 2011; Wenger 1993, 1997; Fielding and Mc Gregor 2005	community	1 2 0	
13	12	Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers	P	Illeris 2014	community	2 0 -4	bottom factor 3
14	13	The university is good at involving students in decisions about their learning	P	Currens 2011	authenticity	3 0 1	
15	14	All students are represented in the student voice	P	Focus Group	processes	1 0 -4	bottom factor 3
16	15	I could make more use of student voice opportunities	P	Focus Group	processes	1 1 3	
17	16	I am unhappy with my university experience	N	Practice	processes	-4 -1 -2	bottom factor 1
18	17	Students moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback they keep quiet	N	Focus Group	agency	3 3 3	All +3
19	18	I can see how speaking up about my university experience has helped me to learn	P	Illeris 2014; Breslin 2011	agency	1 1 2	
20	19	Students don't have the skills to judge learning and teaching	N	Arthur 2009; Williams 2013	power	-2 -3 -2	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
21	20	Using my voice at university has helped me to use my voice in situations outside the university	P	Breslin 2011	agency	1 -1 1	
22	21	Student voice is tokenistic in the way it involves students	N	Practice; Fielding 2001	power	0 0 0	All 0
23	22	The student voice system is set up for staff and not students	N	Practice; Fielding 2001; Arthur 2009	power	-2 -2 0	
24	23	Staff ask for feedback because they are told to by the university	N	Practice	power	-1 -1 0	
25	24	Student voice bridges the gap between staff and students	P	Practice	power	2 3 1	
26	25	I am frustrated that it takes time for action to result from my feedback	N	Focus Group; Currens 2011	agency	0 0 0	All 0
27	26	I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters	P	Green 2005	power	-1 1 -3	
28	27	I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous	N	Focus Group	power	0 -3 0	
29	28	Skills developed through student voice processes and practices make me a better person	P	Illeris 2014	authenticity	0 -1 -2	
30	29	There are no spaces in the university where staff and students are equals	N	Practice; Fielding 2004	community	-1 -1 -1	All 0
31	30	I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will	P	Focus Group	community	0 3 -2	
32	31	Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda	N	Focus Group; Fielding 2001	power	-1 0 1	
33	32	Staff feel criticised by students during feedback opportunities	N	Focus Group	processes	-1 1 1	
34	33	If I voiced my opinion, it might disadvantage my grades	N	Practice	processes	-3 -2 -3	
35	34	Lecturers are scared of what I have to say about their teaching	N	Practice	processes	-3 -1 -2	
36	35	Student representatives represent my views well	P	Focus Group	community	1 1 -1	
37	36	Student voice processes allow me to say what I want to say about my learning	P	Nygaard & Belluigi 2010; Ball 2003	agency	4 2 3	top factor 1
38	37	I don't take student voice seriously because nothing ever changes	N	Focus Group	processes	-1 -2 1	
39	38	There are no systems in the univerity that I trust to give feedback	N	Nygaard & Belluigi 2010; Wenger 2010; Fielding 2001	power	-3 -4 -1	bottom factor 2
40	39	If student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same	N	Practice; Biddulph 2011	processes; agency	-2 -2 0	

	A		B	C	D	E	F	G
41	40	I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating	N	Focus Group	agency	0 -4 0	
42	41	Student voice is about improving the student experience	P	Focus Group; Illeris 2014; Campbell 2011	processes	4 2 2	bottom factor 2
43	42	Involvement in student voice has developed necessary life skills	P	Illeris 2014; Campbell 2011	agency	1 0 -1	

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term 'the student voice'?

2a) How is 'the student voice' used in the university?

b) Good practice?

c) Bad practice?

3) How does 'the student voice' impact upon teaching and learning at the university?

4) Think of an example of when the student voice made a difference to learning & teaching on your course:

•What happened?

•How did is make you feel?

5) How could the university make better use of 'the student voice'

•What would they do?

•What would 'student voice' look like?

•What would need to change?

6) Think of an example when 'the student voice' was ineffective in impacting on learning & teaching on your course

a) What happened?

b) How did it make you feel?

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Year of study

1st year 2013/2014	1
2nd year 2013/2014	2
3rd year 2013/2014	3
Graduated 2013	4
Graduated 2012	5

Involvement in student representation

Not involved in student representation	0
Student rep once	1
Student rep twice	2
Student rep three times	3
School rep	4
Student union officer	5
Graduate intern	6

Gender

Male	M
Female	F

Student type (code removed as all students in p set were home)

Home	1
EU	2
International	3

Ethnic group

White British	1
Other White background	2
Black or Black British African	3
Black or Black British Indian	4
Black or Black British Caribbean	5
Other black background	6
Chinese	7

Mode of study (only applied if relevant to student)

Mature student	M
Part-time	P

APPENDIX 4: Q SORTING PACK

An investigation into students' experience of student voice processes and practices at the university

Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Debra Wale

I (print your name) am happy to take part in this study:

- I have read and fully understand the information that has been provided on the Participant Information Sheet
- I understand that all information collected is confidential
- I am aware that the information collected in this study may be published in the public domain. If this should occur, I understand that I will not be identifiable with in the publication

Signature _____

Date (insert date)

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE Q Sort

These instructions will guide you through the survey step by step. Please read each step to the end before you start carrying it out. I am interested in your point of view. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers.

You will be asked to rank-order (least to most agreement) 42 statements about student voice processes and practices at the university. The numbers on the cards (from 1 to 42) have been assigned to the cards randomly and are only relevant for the analysis of your response.

1. Take the deck of cards and the score grid and sit at a table.

Lay down the score sheet in front of you (left to right-sheets 1 to 3).

2. Read the 42 statements carefully and split them up into three piles:

"AGREE", "NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE" and "DISAGREE"

according to the statement:

To what extent does each statement represent your viewpoint or experience of student voice processes and practices in the university

3. When you have the cards in three piles, count the number of cards in each pile and write down this number in the corresponding box on the score sheet. Please check whether the numbers you entered in the three boxes add up to 42.

4. Take the cards from the "AGREE" pile and read them again. Select the two statements you *most agree* with and place them in the two last boxes on the right of the score sheet, below the "9" (it does not matter which one goes on top or below). Next, from the remaining cards in the deck, select the three statements you *most agree* with and place them in the three boxes below the "8". Follow this procedure for all cards from the "AGREE" pile.

5. Now take the cards from the "DISAGREE" pile and read them again. Just like before, select the two statements you *most disagree* with and place them in the two last boxes on the left of the score sheet, below the "1". Follow this procedure for all cards from the "DISAGREE" pile.

6. Finally, take the remaining cards and read them again. Arrange the cards in the remaining open boxes of the score sheet.

7. When you have placed all cards on the score sheet, please go over your distribution once more and shift cards if you want to.

Please explain why you *agree most* with the two statements you have placed

below the +4

card nr.: … :

card nr.: … :

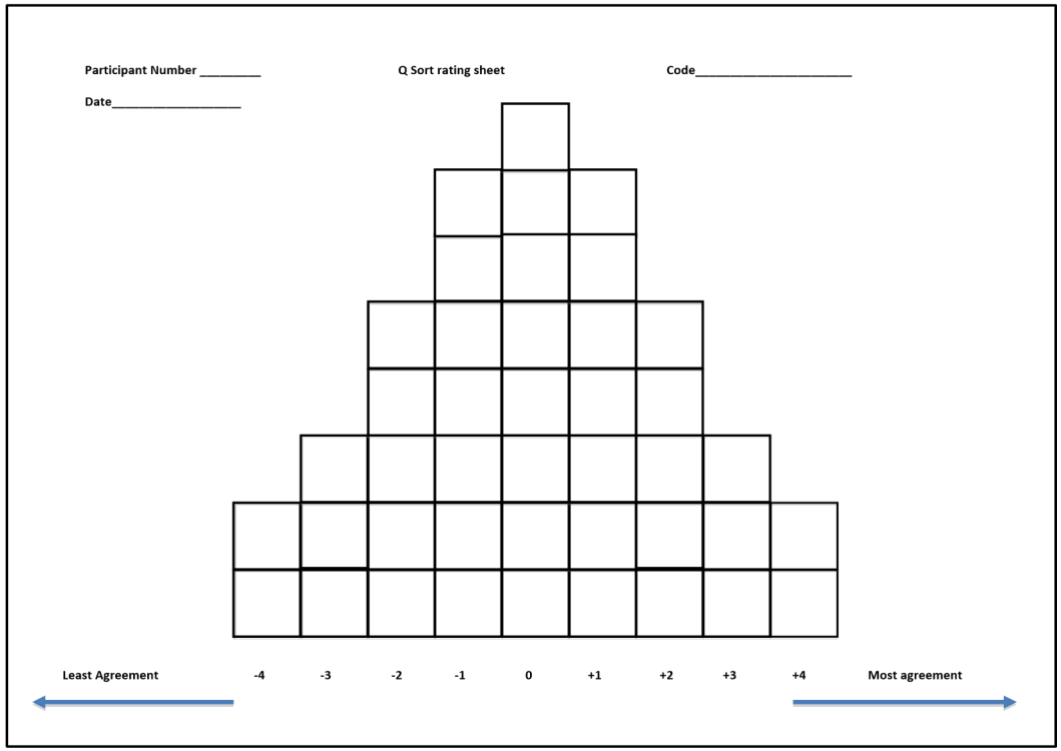
Please explain why you *disagree most* with the two statements you have placed

below the -4

card nr.: … :

card nr.: … :

10. When you are finished, please write down the number on the cards in the boxes on the Q Sort Rating grid.

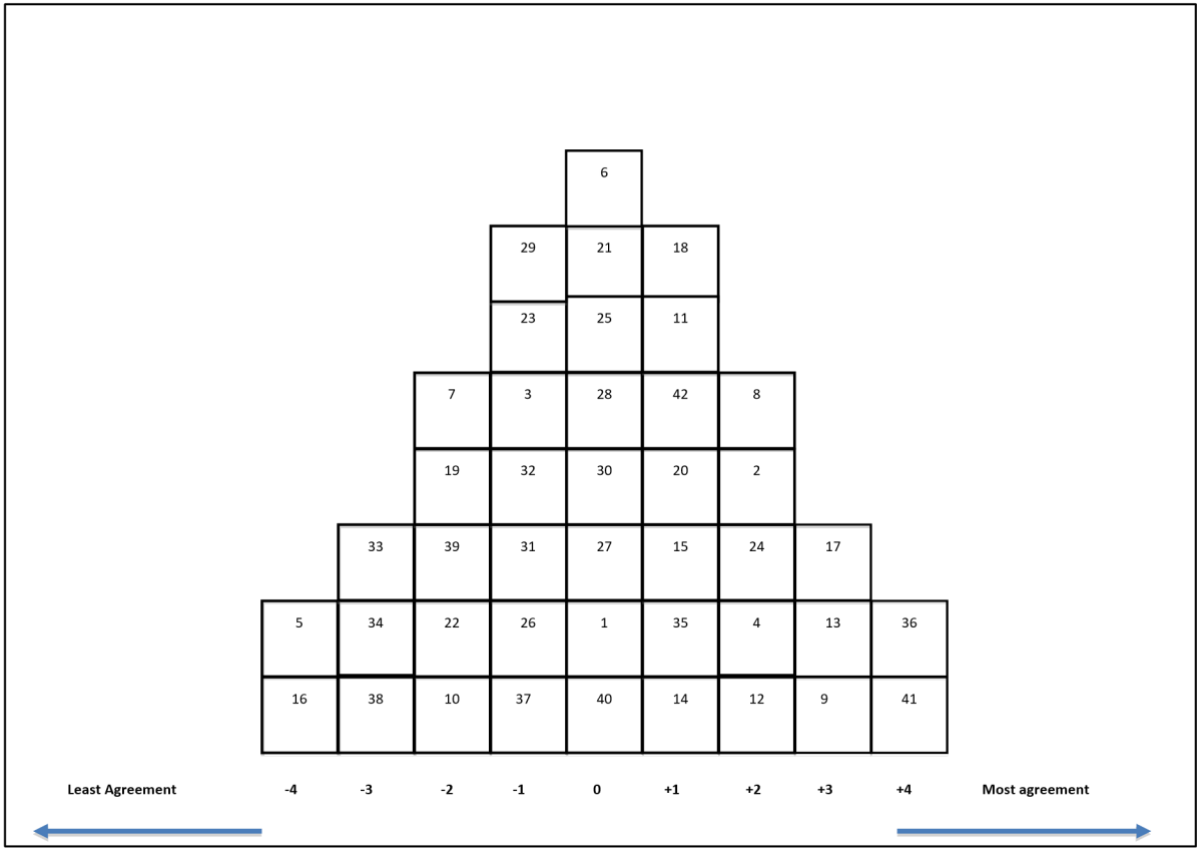

Participant Number _____
Q Sort rating sheet
Code_____
Date_____
Least Agreement
-4
-3
-2
-1
0
+1
+2
+3
+4
Most agreement

APPENDIX 5: FACTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

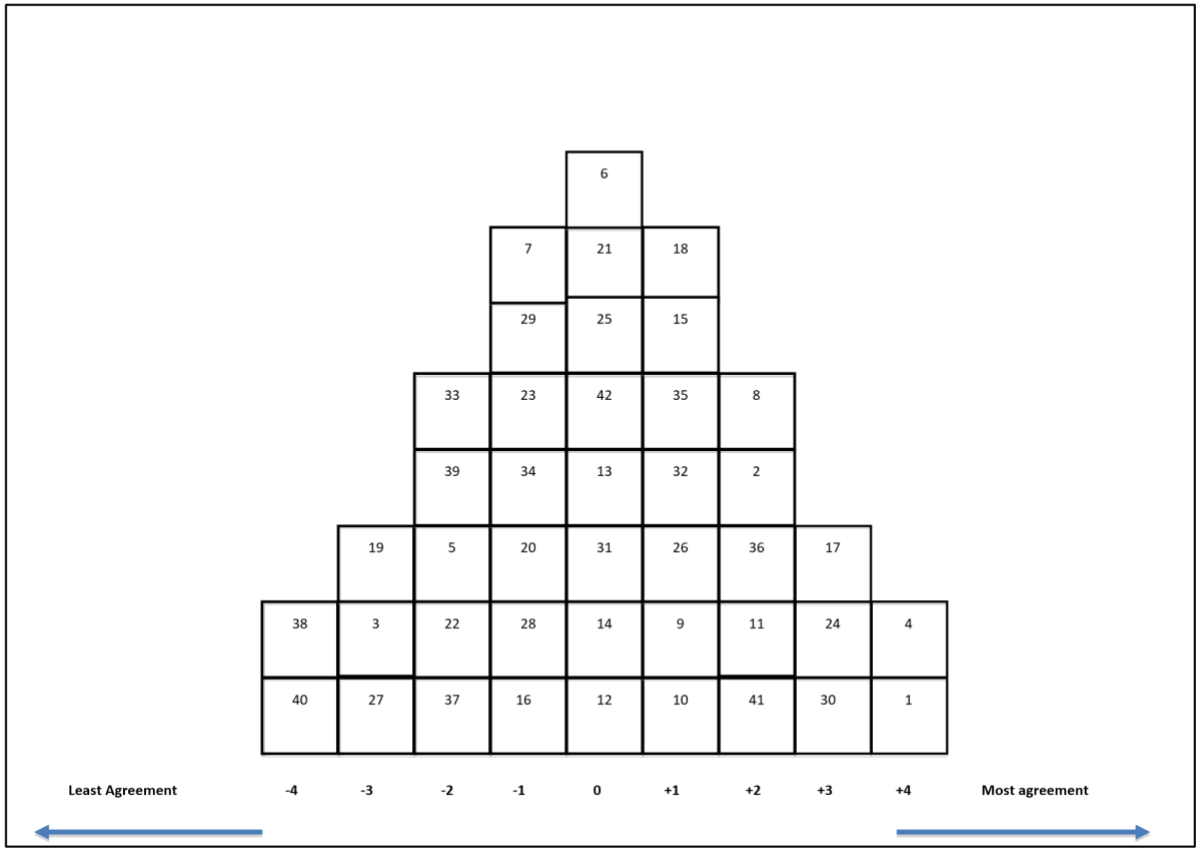
	Population	P set	P set %	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Participants	45	27	60%	12	10	5
Rep/SU Involvement	22	13	59%	6	5	2
Male	12	7	58%	4	2	1
Female	33	20	61%	8	8	4
Mature	20	11	55%	4	6	1
18-21	25	16	64%	8	4	4
Home	45	45	100%	12	10	5
International/EU	3	0	0%	0	0	0
BAME	17	6	35%	3	1	2
White	38	21	55%	9	9	3
Year 1 started 2014	13	8	62%	4	2	2
Year 2 started 2013	16	9	56%	3	5	1
Year 3 started 2012	9	6	67%	4	0	2
Year 4* started 2011	3	3	100%	1	2	0
Year 5* started 2010	4	1	25%	0	1	0
Note *Year 4 and 5 Graduated previous 2 years no international or EU students loaded onto the 3 Factors						

APPENDIX 6: FACTOR ARRAYS

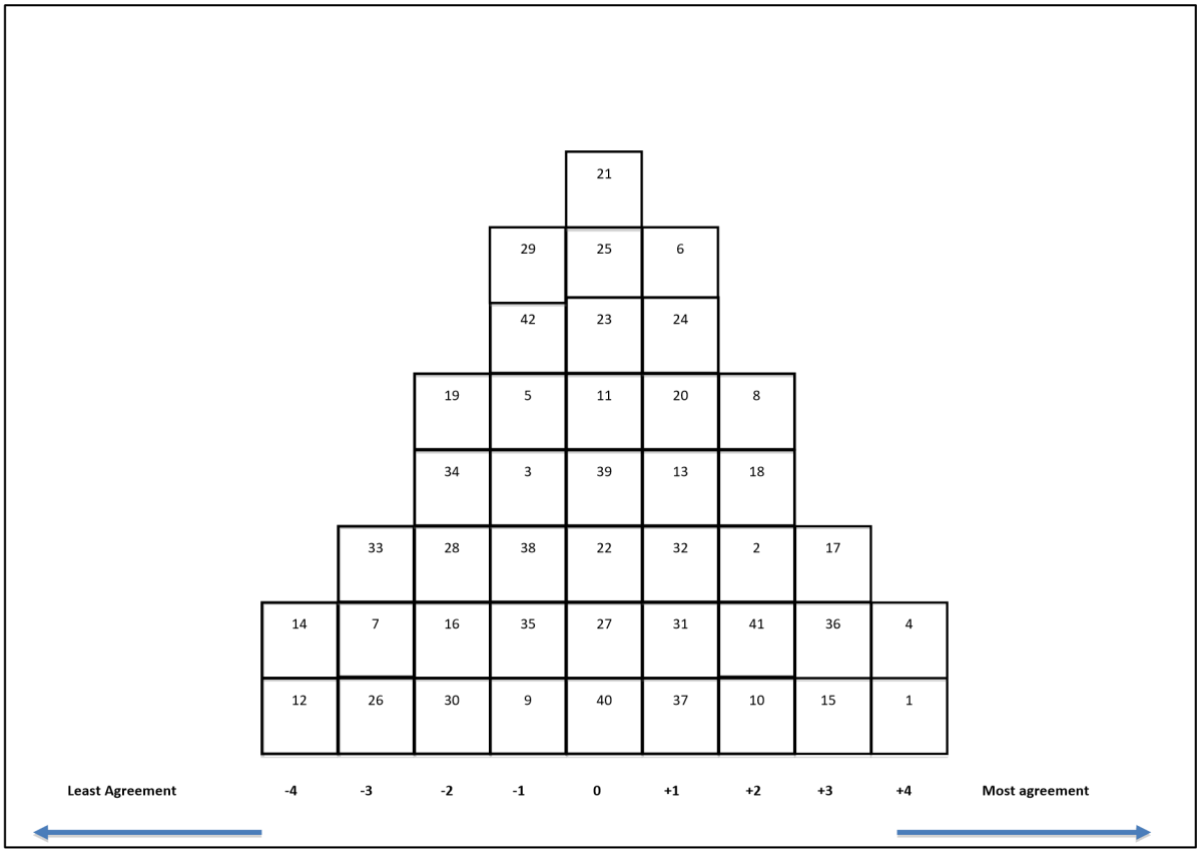
FACTOR 1 ARRAY



FACTOR 2 ARRAY



FACTOR 3 ARRAY



APPENDIX 7: CRIB SHEET

No. Statement **Factor Arrays** **1 2 3**

Items ranked the same in all 3 Factor Arrays

2 Students' views are listened to in meetings 2 2 2

Factor 1: communication in university has helped me with my confidence, talking to people in industry 21FH1

Factor 1: There are often debates which take place in staff/student meetings. Whilst you can see staff taking notes and passing on positive feedback. In addition, there have been instances where negative feedback has been acted upon, and the situation rectified. 32MH1

8 Lecturers are interested in what I have to say about their teaching 2 2 2

I find they are interested and should be seen in a positive manner. They are learning from us as we are them 20FH1

17 Students moan about lectures and when they have the opportunity to feedback they keep quiet 3 3 3

Factor 1: I am usually one of those people as I am not confident in giving my feedback because I am not comfortable with confrontation 20MH1MP

Factor 1: Students are quick to moan about lecturers but aren't willing to contribute to the student voice system 44FH1

Factor 1: It's something I feel strongly about as a student rep. People refuse to engage, participate and turn up to lectures, will not talk to a rep about their issues, but continue to complain and be disruptive 32MH1

Factor 2: Because I give honest feedback it frustrates me when others don't. if people arent prepared to speak up they can't expect change. 51FH1M

Factor 2: Students frequently moaned about aspects of lectures, but only small % would actually voice their opinions or question why lectures were in the format they moaned about. Plenty of opportunity to voice opinion but most refused to openly voice opinion 40MH1M

Factor 3 I am aware many student have complaints they do not want to share. Often they have been said and ignored in the past or feel nothing can be done. Lots of things are complained about on social networking or through talks but a lot of time it does not come up in feedback (particularly if it is about a specific lecturer as this is uncomfortable)21FH1

21 Student voice is tokenistic in the way it involves students 0 0 0

Factor 1: It wouldn't be very reliable if students were picked to go 11FH1

Factor 2: I think most students don't care about the student voice and use if for what tangible aspects they can get out of it ie cookies. However in a way it has to be like that. They don't realise getting involved is good for future prospects. They live for the 'here and now' and care only about themselves 21FH1

25 I am frustrated that it takes time for action to result from my feedback 0 0 0

29 There are no spaces in the university where staff and students are equals -1 -1 -1

Factor 1: staff and students are equal at university 44FH1

ARRAY **1** **2** **3** **Z SCORE**

Factor 1

TOP 2 ITEMS

41 Student voice is about improving the student experience **4 2 2 1.980**

I believe every experience has a positive effect on life by improving on mistakes or situations and it will enhance on any life or student experience on past/present or future, they will reap the positive effect 33FH5M

Student experience is always talked about and emphasised. In feedback, the best is always tried to be aimed for as they want to help in any way they can e.g. through feedback back to students after 30FH1

I agree as student voice is really about students experience (hence the title) it's the main way to help students throughout the university 10FH3

36 Student voice processes allow me to say what I want to say about my learning **4 2 3 1.392**

The student voice allows me to inform the lecturers of not only my own learning but of my peers also. This means students will be able to get across how they learn best 21MH1.

BOTTOM 2 ITEMS

5 Student voice pretends to be about listening to students **-4 -2 -1 -1.725**

I strongly disagree because I don't believe pretend to acknowledge and listen to students because that is truly unacceptable behaviour and why would student voice waste their time and effort. I am a true witness that student voice do (sic) listen and act upon 33FH5M

Student voice helps students talk to/get along with peers on the same course this is one of the key aspects. Issues raised on student voice are rectified which means the students are heard and actions can then be seen 21FH1

It wouldn't be called the student voice if it wasn't set up to give the student a voice at university 11FH1

16 I am unhappy with my university experience **-4 -1 -2 -1.993**

Because it couldn't be further from the truth! My university experience has been entirely positive, primarily through the engagement and rapport that can be established with academic staff 32MH1.

I am thoroughly happy with my experience at the university. If I have any issues regarding the course, I know full well that there is support available from the university lecturers 21MH1.

I feel that university strives to help us to get the best out of teaching and how we feel as students 30FH1

I'm not unhappy. I achieved some good results and hope to graduate at the end of the year 30FH5

I completely disagree I am thoroughly enjoying my time at university 10FH1

The learning and lecturers are fine, it's more to do with being away from home 10MH1M

Basically loving my experience at university, nothing more to be said 20MH1MP

I was extremely happy at university 44FH1

Items ranked higher in factor 1 than in other Factor Arrays

9 Student voice processes allow all students to participate	3	1	-1
All students have the opportunity to vote during the election period and give feedback during mid-term feedback or the NSS 30FH5			
12 Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers	2	0	-4
13 The university is good at involving students in decisions about their learning	3	0	1
14 All students are represented in the student voice	1	0	-4
28 Skills developed through student voice processes and practices make me a better person	0	-1	-2
36 Student voice processes allow me to say what I want to say about my learning	4	2	3
I am given the opportunity to say how I feel and to be truthful about it 10FH1			
41 Student voice is about improving the student experience	4	2	2
42 Involvement in student voice has developed necessary life skills	1	0	-1

Items ranked lower in factor 1 than in other Factor Arrays

1 I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings	0	4	4
4 The feedback I give is honest	2	4	4
Every feedback I give is honest. I want to express my ideas in an honest way 10FH3			
If I am giving feedback, I need to be honest in order for things to change 10FH1			
I am always honest in what I say, some people say I'm too honest and that I could be a lawyer. However (leading into statement 17) 20MH1MP (17: I am usually one of those people as I am not confident in giving my feedback because I am not comfortable with confrontation 20MH1MP)			

I believe that everyone has a voice and should use and view points constructively. Students should speak up and express their concerns, but are very quick to moan and complain but they never express what they feel or experience or feedback and it's very frustrating. Speak up or shut up I believe! 33FH5M

5 Student voice pretends to be about listening to students -4 -2 -1

I strongly disagree because I don't believe pretend to acknowledge and listen to students because that is truly unacceptable behaviour and why should student voice waste their time and effort. I am a true witness that student voice do listen and act upon 33FH5M

10 Student voice processes are inconsistent -2 1 2

16 I am unhappy with my university experience -4 -1 -2

31 Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda -1 0 1

32 Staff feel criticised by students during feedback opportunities -1 1 1

34 Lecturers are scared of what I have to say about their teaching -3 -1 -2

If they were scared they would ask for feedback 10FH1

Distinguishing Statements for Factor 1

No.	Statement	1		2		3	
41	**Student voice is about improving the student experi**ence	4	1.98*	2	1.00	2	0.71
13	**The university is good at involving students in decisions about their learning**	3	1.28*	0	0.34	1	0.37
9	**Student voice processes allow all students to participate**	3	1.20*	1	0.53	-1	-0.57
4	**The feedback I give is honest**	2	1.10*	4	2.15	4	2.24
12	**Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers**	2	1.05*	0	0.36	-4	-2.30
20	**Using my voice at university has helped me to use my voice in situations outside the university**	1	0.86*	-1	-0.10	1	0.14

Student opinions, views are listened to as these matter, any issues are than resolved, being quiet won't resolve any issues 21FH1

35	**Student representatives represent my views wel**l	1	0.81	1	0.39	-1	-0.45
14	**All students are represented in the student voice**	1	0.65*	0	0.00	-4	-1.39

The student voice is about what the students want to happen at the university 11FH1

All students are represented through student voice by peers within course disciplines. This means that the reps can ensure lecturers receive feedback from the students on their course 21MH1

40	**I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating**	0	0.30	-4	-2.14	0	-0.26

Very shy person, so I feel intimidated talking in front of my peers 10MH1M

As a person that lacks confidence, speaking up is intimidating, especially as the processes are so long 30FH1

30	**I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will**	0	0.27*	3	1.10	-2	-0.78
1	**I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings**	0	0.25*	4	2.01	4	2.43
26	**I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters**	-1	-0.59	1	0.55	-3	-1.18

I have never contributed to student voice matters so I could have never influenced resolution 20MH1MP

23	**Staff ask for feedback because they are told to by the university**	-1	-0.71	-1	-0.24	0	-0.11

I feel this isn't the case but by the lecturers themselves to improve their style of teaching 10MH1M

I disagree with this statement because I believe that staff ask for feedback because it is used as a survey to find out positive and negatives of a module and not told by the university 10FH3

32 Staff feel criticised by students during feedback opportunities	-1	-0.79*	1	0.56	1	0.08
31 Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda	-1	-0.82*	0	-0.08	1	0.57
10 Student voice processes are inconsistent	-2	-1.14*	1	0.59	2	0.93
38 There are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback	-3	-1.28	-4	-1.74	-1	-0.55
5 Student voice pretends to be about listening to students	-4	-1.72*	-2	-0.95	-1	-0.73

It wouldn't be called student voice if it wasn't set up to give the student a voice at the university 11FH1
Student voice helps students talk to get along with their peers on the same course this is one of the key aspects. Issues raised on student voice [facebook] are rectified, which means the students are heard and actions can be seen 21FH1

16 I am unhappy with my university experience	-4	-1.99*	-1	-0.48	-2	-1.07

Factor 2

	ARRAY	1	2	3	Z SCORE
TOP 2 ITEMS					
4 The feedback I give is honest		2	4	4	2.152

No point in giving false feedback. Saying what you think people want to hear doesn't change anything-honest feedback good or bad helps to improve and shape product/service/course 40MH1M
I agreed with this card as its true I happily give my honest feedback, regardless of the impact 51FH1M
My feedback is honest because I don't care about impressing people with what they want to hear. I like to pride myself with critically telling it like it is 21FH1
My personal feedback is honest, I look at both sides before I articulate and give an honest account of what I see, hear and understand 21FH1M
Always contribute to feedback as honestly as possible. It is important that the university are aware of students opinions 20FH1
There is no point in giving any feedback if it is not honest. The outcome would then be pointless 10FH1M

1 I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings	0	4	4	2.013	

Having been heavily involved in the student engagement process, I feel confident to voice my opinions as I knew they would be listened to and I would get the relevant feedback. I also found this useful when representing students as I had to speak on behalf of others at senior university meetings 45FH1
I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings as I am the voice of the student population who were brave enough to give me their feedback. If I undertake a role I am passionate and serious about it 21FH1M
As a student rep it is my role to voice opinions, so in general meetings I am confident to voice my own opinions as I understand that this is the way to get problems resolved 22FH1
I feel confident to air any opinions concerning university issues, as I feel that I could be listened to and any action that could take place would take place 10FH1M

BOTTOM 2 ITEMS					
38 There are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback	-3	-4	-1	-1.738	

Had no reason to mistrust any of the university systems for student feedback. Any occasion I had a query or voiced my opinion it was dealt with appropriately 40MH1M
All systems are explained in detail and you as students are reassured to the validity and also that your feedback wont be used without consent (data protection) 22FH1

40 I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating	0	-4	0	-2.136	

I disagree with this statement as I don't find speaking honestly to people in positions of authority intimidating 51FH1M
No I don't find speaking out intimidating and I am happy to use the processes that are in place to channel my feedback 21FH1M

I definitely do not find speaking out on university experience intimidating. All people involved in the 'student voice' are approachable and treat individuals as an equal 10FH1M
Plenty of opportunity given in a free and universal way 20MH1

Items ranked higher in factor 2 than in other Factor Arrays

7 Lecturers ask for feedback, but my comments are ignored	-2	-1	-3
11 Action results from students using their voice collectively	1	2	0

The more students who are agreeing with a problem, the more important the problem is. The university would see it as an issue affecting most and take action 22FH1

24 Student voice bridges the gap between staff and students	2	3	1

I believe that when staff and students have a relationship it helps because if you're a student and there are areas you are struggling with you have the confidence to go and seek help. I think its best I can relate to it 10FH3

26 I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters	-1	1	-3
30 I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will	0	3	-2
33 If I voiced my opinion, it might disadvantage my grades	-3	-2	-3
34 Lecturers are scared of what I have to say about their teaching	-3	-1	-2

Because you don't want to hurt their feelings 10FH3
Lecturers should not be scared of what I have to say about their teaching if they are comfortable in their teaching style. I am sure all I have come into contact with are. I am confident all lecturers are professional 10FH1M

Items ranked lower in factor 2 than in other Factor Arrays

3 Student voice processes do not enable me to voice my true opinion	-1	-3	-1
13 The university is good at involving students in decisions about their learning	3	0	1
16 I am unhappy with my university experience	-4	-1	-2
19 Students don't have the skills to judge learning and teaching	-2	-3	-2

Students are made up of a diverse range of people and needs, they are key in judging the learning and teaching as they are the ones who are involved, the ones learning. I don't see what other skills you need when faced with first hand experience 22FH1
Student opinion identify what benefits them and can often see problems others don't. Students are customers and still require the service to be of a high standard 20MH1

20 Using my voice at university has helped me to use my voice in situations outside the university	1	-1	1
27 I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous	0	-3	0
36 Student voice processes allow me to say what I want to say about my learning	4	2	3

Opportunity given to say what I want without feeling pressured about what I am saying. In different forms as well 20MH1

37 I don't take student voice seriously because nothing ever changes	-1	-2	1

I do take it seriously, some things do change. In some ways students need to be more persistent in their opinion and some things need to be reiterateed more than once to make a difference 20FH1

38 There are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback	-3	-4	-1
40 I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating	0	-4	0

Distinguishing Statements for Factor 2

No.	Statement	1		2		3	
30	**I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will**	0	0.27	3	1.10*	-2	-0.78
26	**I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters**	-1	-0.59	1	0.55*	-3	-1.18
9	**Student voice processes allow all students to participate**	3	1.20	1	0.53*	-1	-0.57
	Plenty of opportunity given to students to eexpress themselves. Does not target individuals. Many different ways down to the student to take advantage 20MH1						
35	**Student representatives represent my views well**	1	0.81	1	0.39	-1	-0.45
12	**Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers**	2	1.05	0	0.36*	-4	-2.30
14	**All students are represented in the student voice**	1	0.65	0	0.00*	-4	-1.39
31	**Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda**	-1	-0.82	0	-0.08	1	0.57
16	**I am unhappy with my university experience**	-4	-1.99	-1	-0.48	-2	-1.07
3	**Student voice processes do not enable me to voice my true opinion**	-1	-0.61	-3	-1.38*	-1	-0.37
27	**I would only give feedback if my comments were anonymous**	0	0.07	-3	-1.67*	0	0.05
	I am happy to give my feedback and have my name attached for the record 51FH1M Don't feel the need for anonymity to give feedback or voice opinion. Student voice has plenty of options and routes to voice concerns/opinions and lecturers were in the majority encouraging and open to communication with students 40MH1M I disagree because I don't care about others opinion is of me 21FH1 I am not concerned with conceiling my identity, I am truthful and honest and believe in what I say. Therefore I am happy to give feedback both positive ad encouraging and negative, opportunities for improvement 21FH1M						
38	**There are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback**	-3	-1.28	-4	-1.74	-1	-0.55
40	**I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating**	0	0.30	-4	-2.14*	0	-0.26

Factor 3

	ARRAY	1	2	3	Z SCORE
TOP 2 ITEMS					
1	**I feel confident to voice my opinion in meetings**	**0**	**4**	**4**	**2.427**
	I do feel that when it comes to voicing my opinions I am confident therefore I am willing to voice my opinion 10FH4 I agree because if I did attend the meetings I would give my honest opinion and I would be confident in doing this 10FH1 I have no fear in voicing my opinion 35MH3M				
4	**The feedback I give is honest**	**2**	**4**	**4**	**2.244**
	I do feel I am honest therefore any feedback that I give will be 100% honest 10FH4 I mostly agree with this as when module feedback is given I always take time to fill it in honestly to achieve results 30FH1				
BOTTOM 2 ITEMS					
14	**All students are represented in the student voice**	**1**	**0**	**-4**	**-1.386**
	I disagree because I don't feel that all students are involved and it is impossible to get all students involved 10FH1				
12	**Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers**	**2**	**0**	**-4**	**-2.302**
	I personally did not need student voice to help me get along with my peers 10FH4 Attempts to engage peers to give feedback have failed resulting in some lack of effort being why I have said the statement at card 15 21FH1				

Items ranked higher in factor 3 than in other Factor Arrays

5 Student voice pretends to be about listening to students	-4	-2	-1
6 The university is accurate in its reporting of student viewpoints	0	0	1
10 Student voice processes are inconsistent	-2	1	2
15 I could make more use of student voice opportunities	1	1	3
18 I can see how speaking up about my university experience has helped me to learn	1	1	2
22 The student voice system is set up for staff and not students	-2	-2	0
23 Staff ask for feedback because they are told to by the university	-1	-1	0
31 Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda	-1	0	1
37 I don't take student voice seriously because nothing ever changes	-1	-2	1
38 There are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback	-3	-4	-1
39 If student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same	-2	-2	0

Items ranked lower in factor 3 than in other Factor Arrays

7 Lecturers ask for feedback, but my comments are ignored	-2	-1	-3

I believe that all feedback given is used to improve or praise lecturers. This will ensure tgat the way lectures are taught can be for the greatest advantage to students. I am sure of this as I have seen changes made as a direct result of feedback 30FH1

9 Student voice processes allow all students to participate	3	1	-1
11 Action results from students using their voice collectively	1	2	0
12 Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers	2	0	-4
14 All students are represented in the student voice	1	0	-4
24 Student voice bridges the gap between staff and students	2	3	1
26 I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters	-1	1	-3
28 Skills developed through student voice processes and practices	0	-1	-2
30 I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will	0	3	-2
35 Student representatives represent my views well	1	1	-1
42 Involvement in student voice has developed necessary life skills	1	0	-1

The skills and experiences gained as a class rep, school rep and activities VP has been vital in building my confidence, speaking to large groups, problem solving, listening and has been the key to me getting future employment 45FH1

Distinguishing Statements for Factor 3

No.	Statement	1		2		3	
15	**I could make more use of student voice opportunities**	1	0.69	1	0.62	3	1.69*

As a student rep I could announce in themes about up coming meetings or student voice (Facebook) assure I have gathered everyone's opinions to feedback. Maybe speak to lecturer on behalf of a student in between meetings 21FH1

37	**I don't take student voice seriously because nothing ever changes**	-1	-0.85	-2	-1.08	1	0.59*

I've been here over 2 years and my points/views haven't been introduced in my course. Also in my second year I strongly helped a student campaigning for student experience VP based on his promises to help my team. He was elected yet nothing changed. I took charge myself 35MH3M .

31 Student voice can be taken out of context to suit the university's agenda	-1	-0.82	0	-0.08	1	0.57
I agree with this statement because I do feel that the student voice is just there for university to say they listen to students 10FH1						
24 Student voice bridges the gap between staff and students	2	1.12	3	1.07	1	0.45
22 The student voice system is set up for staff and not students	-2	-0.95	-2	-1.13	0	-0.02*
39 If student voice opportunities were removed, university would be the same	-2	-0.88	-2	-1.02	0	-0.10*
40 I want to speak out on my university experience but find processes intimidating	0	0.30	-4	-2.14	0	-0.26
35 Student representatives represent my views well	1	0.81	1	0.39	-1	-0.45*
42 Involvement in student voice has developed necessary life skills	1	0.32	0	0.02	-1	-0.54
38 There are no systems in the university that I trust to give feedback	-3	-1.28	-4	-1.74	-1	-0.55*
9 Student voice processes allow all students to participate	3	1.20	1	0.53	-1	-0.57*
Although the voting process is in place for rep when there are only two they automatically get the role, although this is the only way of doing this, if other student are not comfortable (friends) with the rep(s) they will not be helpful or feedback to them 21FH1						
30 I am happy that while I will not benefit as a result of my feedback, future student cohorts will	0	0.27	3	1.10	-2	-0.78*
I disagree with this because any feedback current students give should be put into place. The current students need to see the changes made 10FH1						
28 Skills developed through student voice processes and practices make me a better person	0	0.19	-1	-0.10	-2	-0.94*
16 I am unhappy with my university experience	-4	-1.99	-1	-0.48	-2	-1.07
I am definitely happy with my experience at uni as I have been able to make a lot of friends and I get along with all of my peers 10FH4						
Although it may not be based on academic study, the friendships I have made along with personal experience and evolution over the years would have never occured if not for university 35MH3M						
26 I have influenced resolution of conflict in student voice matters	-1	-0.59	1	0.55	-3	-1.18
12 Student voice processes have helped me to build relationships with my peers	2	1.05	0	0.36	-4	-2.30*